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# The Use of the Bible in Interpreting Salvation Today: An Evangelical Perspective

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## INTRODUCTION

LET IT be said right from the outset of our discussion, that we are under no illusions about the magnitude of the task of saying something significant, and yet reasonably concise, on this extensive subject. Applicable is the saying: Where angels fear to tread, fools go blindly in.

There is, however, considerable compensation in the fact of knowing that the subject is probably the most crucial one which has to be tackled in contemporary theology; all the more so in the present context of a first attempt at a serious dialogue between an *ad hoc* group of evangelicals and a team invited by the W.C.C. I think the geographical representation of both sides is a cause for satisfaction. I am genuinely hopeful that this fact will be reflected in the way we handle our discussion: avoiding narrow structures of thought and easy stereotypes, and provoking that openness and candour which are the prerequisites for a fruitful and creative debate on this complicated and fundamental issue.

The initiative for these conversations has come, in part, from the evangelical side because of its growing dismay and impatience at the way the Bible appears to be used in official conciliar documents, and in articles and papers prepared by scholars who evidently possess the confidence of the organizing departments of the W.C.C.<sup>1</sup> p. 2 The evangelical objection primarily concerns what might loosely be called a neo-Marcionite approach to Scripture by which only certain parts are selected as an acceptable, authentic testimony to God's revelation today, and a neo-Alexandrine hermeneutical practice which uses the text in a basically uncontrolled paradigmatic, figurative and even inspirational fashion.

These objections have led some evangelicals to accuse the W.C.C. of a certain basic dishonesty in its interpretation of the Bible: accepting that the Bible provides the only universally acknowledged norm for the doctrine and practice of the churches, it appears to circumvent its authority and ignore the controlling influence of its criteria when actually doing theology in the midst of the challenge and ferment of the modern world.

Having pronounced a severe accusation from the evangelical side, it would be unfair not to mention that the criticism of a dishonest hermeneutic is mutual, i.e. that evangelicals have also been under constant fire for their inconsistent, naïve, selective and culturally conditioned handling of the Scriptures. Indeed, the accusation of neo-Marcionism and neo-Alexandrianism could well be returned with emphasis.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. the plenary paper presented at the 5th General Assembly of the World Council by McAfee Brown, 'Who is this Jesus Christ who frees and unites?' For further details of the use of the Bible in specific instances of belief and action, cf. R. Beckwith, 'The Use of the Bible in the World Council of Churches' (*The Churchman*, Vol. 89, No. 3, July–Sept. 1975), pp. 213–24.

Let me say at once that I am prepared to accept that such criticism as far as much evangelical interpretation goes is well deserved. It is absolutely true, and was so recognized in the Lausanne Covenant,<sup>2</sup> that evangelicals are just about as guilty as anyone in not recognizing the hidden, unexamined presuppositions which, when converted into the 'traditions of the elders', hinder their understanding of the meaning of the Scriptures and close their ears to what the Spirit is saying to the churches today. There are, unfortunately, forms of sectarian and triumphalistic evangelicalism, often linked to powerful organizational interests, which consider criticism of their exegetical practice as tantamount to an abandonment of evangelical belief.

However, I am firmly convinced that such an attitude is a negation of true evangelicalism, which historically has always defined its stance in terms of a constant examination, in the light of fresh truth springing from Scripture (whoever may be God's instrument in causing it to be discovered), of all doctrine, all practice and even [p. 3](#) more significantly, its own hermeneutical methodology.<sup>3</sup> This is the only way of truly identifying and defending the characteristic evangelical view of the status and purpose of the Bible: 'we affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written Word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice....' (Lausanne Covenant, Clause 2). Because of the reality of these mutual accusations, a discussion of Biblical hermeneutics between evangelicals and non-evangelicals is bound to be polemical. This, I believe, is both good and constructive as long as there is a genuine Christian and human respect for those with whom one disagrees, which issues in a practice of listening and understanding. I believe there are profound disagreements about the way we should use the Bible today. Nothing is to be gained, therefore, by minimizing these differences; indeed, all present and future encounters will only be meaningful to the extent that we face honestly those issues and criticisms considered to be fundamental by the other side.

The fact that discrepancies over the use of the Bible appear to constitute the most crucial point of division between the two groups has induced me to devote a good deal of space to discussing the current issues in Biblical hermeneutics, as I see them. The basic framework of the discussion is supplied by those hermeneutical presuppositions which, I believe, most evangelicals would accept as authentically their own. This means that my approach is not the classic one which believes that a preliminary debate about Biblical authority is the only place to begin a discussion of Biblical hermeneutics, but rather one in which the meaning of Biblical authority is in fact demonstrated by the way in which we engage upon our hermeneutical task. Within the context of this approach, interpreting salvation today will be viewed as one instance (probably the most important) of the way in which the Bible is used, and ought to be used, so that the Church of Jesus Christ may more obediently and effectively fulfil the purpose of its Lord.

## EVANGELICAL HERMENEUTICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

Interpretation of the Bible undertaken by evangelicals is done [P. 4](#) from a perspective of commitment which involves a particular way of regarding the Scriptures.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sections 1, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11 and 12, *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* (Minneapolis, World Wide Publications, 1975).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J.R.W. Stott, 'The Authority and Power of the Bible' in C.R. Padilla (ed.), *The New Face of Evangelicalism* (London, Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1976), pp. 38-40.

Contrary to a prolonged misunderstanding about the evangelical's view of Biblical authority, the principle of *Sola Scriptura* is not held as an end in itself. As an article of faith it possesses no independent existence from the more fundamental reality of the authority of the Trinity, an authority exercised equally in the realms of creation and salvation. The Scripture is the *norma Dei* only because it is the vehicle through which God has chosen to mediate his authority to his chosen people. The principle of *Sola Scriptura*, then, is basically a hermeneutical principle, a particular way of viewing the interpretative task.

This belief is based on a variety of arguments, of which the following are the most important. First, commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is meaningful only on the basis of accepting what he said about himself. This means accepting the historical Christ-event (of which the completion of Scripture was a part) as not only the end of the law but as the end of God's special revelation as well. Another way of stating the same argument is to say that Christ is the final reference-point for the true content of God's revelation of himself. This conviction is based on three distinct lines of evidence: the exegetical, by an appeal to the content of Jesus Christ's life and teaching; the theological, by deduction from the fact that he is the only effective inaugurator of the new age; the ideological—if God's revelation in Jesus Christ is not unique and final then he may be passed over for subsequent 'Christ-symbols', like Camilo Torres or Che Guevara, receptacles (*per argumentum*) of a wholly contemporary revelation in a new 'messianic' event. Secondly, a consistent interpretation of Scripture depends upon whether the interpreter, or interpreting group, accepts Scripture's own claim about itself. Though 'Jews call for miracles (and) Greeks look for wisdom, we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Greeks'. We should not make the Bible deny what it claims to affirm about itself, even if difficult from the standpoint of our wisdom, namely that it is uniformly the inspired Word of God written. This is not the place to enter upon a lengthy defence of this traditional Christian view of Scripture. Our intention, rather, is to state that what the evangelical considers to be the Scripture's internal testimony to its own nature is part of the reason why he believes it is the unique, mediating vehicle of God's authority. p. 5 Moreover, this view profoundly affects a total hermeneutical approach, for an evangelical is freed from the arbitrary and reductionist task, as he sees it, of peeling away layers of purely human words in order to find within the Bible the true Word of God. At the same time, he is able, from the outset of his exegetical task, to take seriously the whole message of the text. In other words, the evangelical starts from the assumption that the Biblical consciousness of itself is non-negotiable. Thirdly, the closing of the canon of the Old and New Testaments testifies to a qualitative distinction between the written apostolic tradition (the *tupos didaches*) and all subsequent Church tradition. The evangelical believes that the only wholly reliable access to apostolic teaching is available in the pages of the New Testament. His view of apostolic succession is consistent with this belief, namely, that apostolicity is transmitted only through adherence to apostolic belief and practice. An evangelical believes that the full implications of the closing of the canon will affect the way in which Scripture is approached and interpreted in practice. By way of summary, we can say that the evangelical principle of *Sola Scriptura* means in essence that the written word of the Bible is, for all time, God's chosen means for the mediation of his own sovereign authority as the only Creator and Redeemer.

The principle involves a series of derivative premises which closely affect actual hermeneutical practice. We can only enumerate them briefly, hoping that they may be amplified in discussion.

(1) The *unity* of Scripture is more important than its diversity. In the choice of hermeneutical keys to aid the understanding of meaning and application, the evangelical does not find any contradicting principles. He does not hesitate to affirm that the Bible

contains a theological pluralism, for the wisdom of God is multifarious. But, for him, pluralism means complementarity, not contradiction. He does not believe, therefore, that it is either possible or necessary to have to choose between antagonistic traditions, as if the orchestra of Biblical authors were sounding discordant notes. 'If the trumpet-call is not clear, who will prepare for battle?'

(2) The reference to the clarity of the instrument brings us to the supposition that the Bible contains a central *perspicuity* which ensures that its central message is understandable on its own terms. The Bible is its own most faithful interpreter; it possesses a unique perspective from which alone it may be rightly understood. p. 6 Biblical interpretation demands as a prerequisite that 'we try to think Biblical thoughts in a Biblical mode, rather than reclassifying the Bible statements along some other lines'.<sup>4</sup>

(3) The use of pre-understandings for the hermeneutical task of interpreting Scripture today, when they are imported from contemporary, non-Biblical, thought-systems, more often obscure rather than release the meaning of Scripture. This negative approach to man's contemporary self-consciousness, derived from a basically monolithic modern philosophical, psychological and sociological *Weltanschauung*, as a necessary aid to the completion of the hermeneutical circle, is often a gut reaction amongst evangelicals. There also exists, however, a more careful presuppositional analysis of the usually temporary alliances forged between interpreters of Scripture and philosophical and historical movements.

This analysis is also conducted as part of a continuous hermeneutical circulation. It may begin either from the Bible's realistic assessment of man's proneness to intellectual and practical idolatry, an integral result of the Fall upon man's mind, or it may start from a historical survey of the theoretical and practical effects of post-Enlightenment Man's grasping after the straw of autonomy in a closed-system universe ('man is the highest being for man'). Either way, the result is the same: there is a fundamental incompatibility between the fragmented and dualistic approach to reality by man without God and the unitary approach adopted by the Biblical witnesses. As Trestmontant rightly remarks, 'conversion to Christianity requires a metaphysical conversion which abandons the pantheistic metaphysics of paganism in exchange for Biblical metaphysics'.<sup>5</sup> Belonging to the *new age* demands that our minds are re-made to think, and our entire natures to act, according to the norms, values and structures of that age. For our intellectual and moral formation has been largely dominated and formed by a cultural consensus (whether in the East or in the West) which is in sharp contrast to the Biblical worldview.

(4) Hermeneutical practice is faithful to *Sola Scriptura* only when it disassociates itself from the contemporary custom of doing theology according to the pattern of theological fashions and p. 7 schools. There are at least two fundamental and interrelated reasons why the familiar method of practising theology in the academic establishments of the West is inimical to the *Sola Scriptura* principle: first, it does not coincide with the Biblical way; secondly, it tacitly assumes that doing theology is a self-justifying intellectual pursuit rather than a means subordinate to furthering a more significant end. To argue the first case, I cannot do better than quote a short passage from an article by José Miguez, in which he first suggests that the Western tradition of theology is conducted in a manner in which 'theology begets theology'—'it is a process aimed at determining, explicating and possibly vindicating the correct doctrine, on the basis of the study of Scripture and Tradition, and sometimes with the use of philosophical categories'—and then puts to it the following

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<sup>4</sup> J. H. Yoder, 'The Message of the Bible on its own terms' (unpublished ms., Elkhart, Indiana, 1969).

<sup>5</sup> Cited by E. Cherbonnier, 'Is there a Biblical Metaphysic?' (Theology Today XV, 1959), p. 454. Cf. also C.R. Padilla, 'Evangelism and the World' in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, *op. cit.*

question: 'If we see theology in this way, and if we follow this procedure, a fact that should make us pause is that in the Scriptures we find very few instances, if any, of such a process of theologizing ... What we usually find there is the story of a particular situation of the people of God, and how the Word of God comes to comfort, to admonish, to command, to advise, to correct or to condemn God's people in different situations. Such a collection is the theological norm that we have, and we should pay attention to the character of this norm.'

Secondly, the study of Scripture presupposes, for an evangelical, that the purpose in view is to make us wise concerning salvation in Jesus Christ, to teach the truth and refute error, and to equip us for good works of every kind. This means, in effect, that Biblical hermeneutics should never become a speculative discipline, but a liberating force; concerning itself not so much with a discussion *about* faith as with the obedience *of* faith. In other words, the way we set about our exegetical task is already evidence of the ways in which we interpret the relationship between the text and salvation in Christ. The purpose of all hermeneutics, as an evangelical sees it, is to facilitate the Church's understanding of the Biblical message in the context of obedience to its missionary task in the world. Later we shall consider the question of the *locus*, or context, of the hermeneutical task.

(5) The principles of unity and perspicuity of the Biblical message demand that we work from the assumption of a radical distinction between the Church and the world, or between the two ages. This means that, whereas we must be fully aware of the dangerous and [p. 8](#) indefensible tendency towards a theological dualism in evangelical (and non-evangelical) circles, the current drift towards historical and philosophical monism underlying the propensity to syncretism and universalism in modern theology is a particularly destructive denial of the Gospel. An evangelical will work from the *heilsgeschichtliche* framework of Biblical revelation and reject the current notion, popularized by the Theology of Liberation, of the salvation of history.

## THE STATUS OF TECHNICAL EXEGESIS

The initial aim of all exegesis must be to arrive at as objective an assessment of the original meaning of a Biblical passage as possible. This original meaning is generally referred to as the *sensus literalis*, the proper (or natural) meaning which may be discovered basically through the use of linguistic tools.<sup>6</sup> The chief value of the method used to discover the *sensus literalis* is that it is essentially open to discussion. Exegetes can appeal to more or less objective criteria in order to accept or reject a particular interpretation. Individual and dogmatic interpretations may be submitted to the scrutiny of language, grammar and syntax.

Nevertheless, purely technical exegesis is of limited value in a total hermeneutical process. Its claim to be scientific rests on a misunderstanding of the scientific method which demands that all tentative hypotheses be submitted to rigorous tests based on criteria which are universally recognized to be valid. Biblical exegesis, by its nature, cannot utilize this method. Rather, its verification criteria are historical, logical and personal.

No technical investigation therefore is absolutely objective. Indeed, in the history of Biblical exegesis some of the most farreaching techniques for interpreting Scripture (source, literary and form-criticism) have been founded on hypotheses not ultimately verifiable on the basis of objective data. Thus, for example, most evangelicals would

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<sup>6</sup> For a slightly different definition of the *sensus literalis*, cf. below, [p. 9](#), the one offered by *Divino Afflante*.



consider that the criteria used for the separation of strands of tradition in the Pentateuch are intrinsically subjective and that the main presupposition underlying the form-critical method of analysis of the Synoptic Gospels is speculative and based on a near-circular argument. p. 9

There are other reasons, which relate to a more total hermeneutical process, for insisting on the inadequacy of a purely technical investigation of the text's meaning:

- (i) there already exists a hermeneutical circle within the Bible (e.g. in the case of the Exodus);
- (ii) the modern emphasis on the *redaktionsgeschichtliche* method shows that wider theological concerns are a legitimate part of a comprehensive understanding of the text;
- (iii) even so-called technical interpretation is an art which involves such hermeneutical undertakings as translation, commentary and application into the horizon of the exegete's world;
- (iv) there are probably already different levels of meaning, even in the case of the *sensus literalis*. The Encyclical, *Divino Afflante*, for example, has defined it as what the author 'intended', giving the impression that the intention is that which the historico-critical method is able to establish. However, is it intrinsically possible to discover what the author intended? Would it not require a degree of insight and knowledge which the modern exegete, so far removed in time, cannot be expected to possess? Or, conversely, would it not require a sympathy between the respective situations of exegete and Biblical writer, the necessity of which is already assumed in the search for an adequate hermeneutical method? Perhaps, therefore, we should define *sensus literalis* as what the writer 'said'. However, even this is not wholly satisfactory, for what the writer said is really a euphemism for what the writer 'communicates', and this again presupposes a hermeneutical circle. The task of establishing the *sensus literalis* seems to involve both technical methods of exegesis and a consciously assumed vantage-point on the part of the exegete. If this conclusion seems to undermine the discipline of Biblical exegesis, then one only needs to point to the history of interpretation to show that this is exactly how exegesis has been carried out in practice. The problem is not with technical exegesis as such, but with certain assumptions underlying its use as a discipline. In order that too much not be expected from its performance, due to the limits imposed by the method, the wider meaning, purpose and context of p. 10 all hermeneutical endeavour should be emphasized from the beginning.

## THE HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE

The recognition of Biblical hermeneutics as a circular process rests on the fact that no exegesis is neutral. The methodology which assumes that it is possible to establish first an unequivocal meaning for the text which is then applied through the use of other theological disciplines to our historical existence is built on a delusion. However, the recognition of how we work in practice (i.e. by taking our conscious or unconscious presuppositions to the text) should not lead to a methodological scepticism. Quite the contrary, by taking into account the process involved in building bridges between the text and our context we are enabled to avoid undue subjectivisms and relativisms in the process. Of crucial importance will be the examination of our presuppositions and the choice of a hermeneutical key.

We have already spelt out some of the presuppositions which we consciously adopt in our approach to Scripture. We will complement this by a general discussion of the *sitz im leben* of the interpreter.

### **1. Probable Influences Bearing on Interpretation**

We can do no more than list these as they occur to us, but a fuller discussion of each one would be an interesting exercise to clarify unexamined assumptions:

- (i) cultural and political assumptions in the interpretation of such Biblical concepts as freedom, law, justice, the family, etc.;
- (ii) ecclesiastical traditions in the interpretation of Church order, the sacraments, the relationship between Church and State (majority, minority Church), etc.;
- (iii) functional responsibility within the Church: is the interpreter financially dependent upon his denomination? What is his position in the hierarchical structure? If he is a theological professor, is he maintained by the denomination or by the State? etc.; [p. 11](#)
- (iv) level of education achievement. To what extent does the interpreter think and reason in conceptual form? Is his background non-conceptual, i.e. more visual, intuitive (tending, perhaps, to the immediatism of pietism)? or is it more intellectualist, discursive (tending perhaps to alternations leading to agnosticism)?

### **2. Interpretation as a Cross-Cultural Discipline**

A consideration of the historical dimensions of the interpreter's background, those which particularly influence his interpretation, has been widened recently. The social sciences have learnt (mainly from Marx and Freud) the art of suspicion, by which subtle ideological and psychological conditionings which affect the adoption of particular temporary value-systems are unmasked. The influence of these value-systems on the hermeneutical task can be illustrated in multiple ways, for example:

- (i) the supposed contradiction between the Biblical prescientific worldview and the modern scientific worldview;
- (ii) the confusion between passing cultural values and genuinely Christian values in the modern missionary movement, illustrated, for example, by the persistent idea that the Gospel is wholly apolitical;
- (iii) the difficulty encountered, in translating the original languages of the texts, of finding equivalent terms across different language systems;
- (iv) the approach to symbolic and 'mythical' language: under the influence of a Hellenistic mentality, much exegesis has only looked for ideas behind the symbols, ignoring or rejecting the possibility that they may point to both historical events and real personal relationships.

As soon as we speak about the meaning of the text to another human being, interpretation immediately involves cross-cultural communication. It may also involve a trans-linguistic process on a triangular basis: the original languages, my native language, the language of the receptor. [p. 12](#)

### **3. The Adoption of Conscious Pre-Understandings for the Hermeneutical Task**

The adoption of unconscious pre-understandings is a fact. That is why hermeneutics is partly a polemical, purifying exercise: I must rebuke my brother when he allows cultural and ideological factors to obscure his understanding of an obedience to the message of



the text; likewise, I must be open to similar correction (so Paul and Peter, the Corinthian Church, etc.).

But hermeneutics is also a creative exercise when it comes to a choice between pre-understandings. In this context I would like to deal with three critical issues which have been regarded as privileged hermeneutical *loci* in recent debate: the concept of the 'signs of the times', the 'social question', and evangelism.

*(a) The 'signs of the times'*

These are defined as special signs of God's active presence in contemporary world events, or evidences of the end-times breaking into present world history. In recent theological thinking, for example, certain revolutionary pressures for radical change have been understood as signs of God's action to bring about more humanizing structures in society.

I think we are right to be very attentive to the signs of the times, seeking to discover how God continues to act in the concourse of the nations. Nevertheless, both the concept and its theological grounding are highly ambiguous hermeneutical guides. First, today's events, in so far as they concern man, can rarely be interpreted unequivocally. The human sciences are not precise interpretative and formative instruments. Secondly, the status of particular events as revealers of God's saving activity in history, even assuming universal agreement as to their interpretation, is hard to establish. Real life, at both the macro- and micro-level, requires its own hermeneutical circle of interpretation, of which revelation will constitute a fundamental part. Thirdly, God cannot be meaningfully discovered in today's events without a prior commitment to a certain interpretation of his action in the archetypal events. Without this prior commitment, it would be less ambiguous to interpret today's reality in wholly secular terms. Fourthly, the possibility of syntonization between the signs of the present and the *semeia* which irrefutably point to Jesus as *the* Messiah, *the* Son of God, p. 13 depend upon a core Biblical interpretation of the events which is comprehensible within its own terms of reference.

*(b) The 'social question'*

The fundamental questions of injustice and oppression operating against vast numbers of underprivileged people has become a polemical issue since the time of the French Revolution when the real causes of poverty began to be analysed. I would venture to suggest that, like the poor, the scandal of poverty in relation to the ability of technology to produce abundance will always be around to haunt us. As in the case of our hermeneutical stance, no neutral position is possible with regard to this question. Indeed, when faced with the obligation to create ways of solving at least some of the social problems, the social question poses itself to the Biblical exegete, not so much as a pre-understanding (a largely noetic concept), but as a pre-commitment (a definite praxiological stance).

Now that the rules of theological discourse can no longer be settled and imposed upon the rest of the Church by white, Anglo-Saxon males, the social question, acutely felt at the periphery of the world—the majority of the Southern Hemisphere and the ghettos of the Northern—will figure more largely on the agenda of a Biblical hermeneutic. If, as Gutierrez maintains, the context of post-Enlightenment theology in the industrialized countries of the West has largely been the 'non-believer', in the rest of the world it is the 'non-man', the 'wretched of the earth': the suffering, the poor and the exploited.

The social question is being (re)discovered by evangelicals—timidly, still full of prejudices, scared to take risks. Yet they have little to be afraid of, if the only consideration were faithfulness to their own hermeneutical presuppositions, for the social question looms large in the Bible and the God of revelation, ruling out all exploitation as an

abomination in his sight, has shown a particular concern for the defenceless and those disqualified by society.

Now, the social question is not free from ambiguity. There are clearly aspects of the present question which are not contemplated in the Scriptures (though such modern-sounding notions as 'accumulated wealth', 'wage-labourer' and 'surplus-value' can be found in the Biblical texts), just as there are modern instruments of socio-economic analysis which had not been forged before the 19th century. The question of syntony between, for example, the prophetic [p. 14](#) view of history as the arena where God denounces and announces, dismantles and constructs, and modern political and economic analysis, is not easily resolved. If we were to take Marxism as an example, we might want to say that, on the one hand, its structural analysis of economic relations can act as a species of 'hermeneutical plus' which syntonizes with a whole cluster of Scriptural passages which see in the private accumulation of riches the basic cause of poverty. On the other hand, Marxism as a pretended total view of reality, inevitably acts in a reductionist fashion when allowed a privileged position within the hermeneutical circle. As a philosophical 'totality' (Levinas), it is open to the same judgement, for its absolutist pretensions, as any humanism.

### *(c) Evangelism*

The Gospel of the Kingdom is addressed not only to the sociologically poor, but also to the morally and spiritually lost. If we accept, with reservations, Marx's philosophical, historical and economic analysis of man's alienation as loss of humanness in his relations with other men, would it not be possible to do a socio-political study, emulating Marx, of man's alienation as loss of humanness in relation to his Creator? It is this loss, or lostness, which determines the priority of evangelism in the hermeneutical task. All men, oppressors and oppressed alike, 'in our natural condition lie under the dreadful judgement of God ... dead in our sins'.

The Church's attitude to evangelism is the acid test, in practice, of its view of man and its understanding of the nature and extension of salvation, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Once again we are not at liberty to eliminate from the text clear teaching about the nature of man's total existence in the universe. At the same time, we are at liberty to forge new analytical tools to help us see more clearly today why the evangel is good news for modern man, enmeshed as he is in a complex predicament from which he is powerless to save himself.

## **SALVATION TODAY**

The immediately preceding section on the choice of hermeneutical pre-understandings sets the scene for a contemporary discussion of salvation. The meaning of salvation can be determined only by an adequate analysis of man's situation; *from what* does he need to be saved? Remission of sin must fit the crime. [P. 15](#)

Both the Bible and modern sociological analysis understand man foremost in terms of relationships. Only the Bible sees these relationships in a three-dimensional pattern of existence: God, neighbour and nature. Modern sociological analysis is well aware that man is alienated from his neighbour, from nature and from himself, and proposes a welter of hypotheses to explain the causes and consequences of this alienation (thereby presupposing the image of nonalienated man). At the same time, it proposes a variety of ways of salvation which would rescue him from the consequences of his alienation (thereby presupposing the possibility of a new order, the permanent eschatological pull

of Utopia). Only the Bible explains interhuman alienations by positing a prior cause in man's alienation from God. This datum is crucial in the use of the Bible in interpreting salvation today.

Precisely at this point we encounter two great divides today. The first divide is between the humanist and the Christian account of human alienation. The humanist experiences alienation as an existential problem which may have either psychological, economic or even evolutionist explanations. On the basis of his humanist presuppositions, however, he finds it hard to interpret alienation in fundamentally ethical terms. There is a logic which drives him beyond considerations of good and evil.

The second divide occurs within the churches and centres on the explanations given for the root nature of alienation. The divide may be a matter of emphasis, though we suspect that there are fundamental discrepancies regarding the historical nature of original sin. On the one hand, there is the interpretation of root sin in terms of man's oppression of man (according to this view the primal sin was homicide—[Genesis 4](#)); on the other hand, there is the interpretation in terms of man's suppression of God ([Genesis 3](#)). We might call the first view the moral and the second the ontological.

An evangelical would argue that only the ontological account of the *cause* of alienation does full justice to the total Biblical understanding of the radicality of sin, and therefore only that salvation which reaches this level merits the epithet salvation, within a proper Biblical hermeneutical circle.

The ontological explanation is irreducible to other categories. In the Bible it is described with the use of such concepts as wilful disobedience, idolatry, unfaithfulness, abuse of freedom, etc. It is perhaps most fully expressed in Paul's use of the word *asebeia* p. 16 in [Romans 1:18ff](#). *Asebeia* is the acceptance of a lie about the fundamental nature of the universe: it means stifling the truth about both the Creator and the creature; it is the action whereby man unilaterally and universally changes the reality of his relationship to the Creator as creature into one in which he demands the status of God. Injustice, *adikia* (the complementary part of the hendiadys), is the result of *asebeia*. Because man lays claim to the throne of heaven, he claims the right to decide the destiny of his fellow man. So he justifies oppression by an appeal to the 'givenness' of a particular order, i.e. its possession of a 'divine' sanction.

The Biblical concept of man's ontological self-alienation stands, methodologically, as a hypothesis which (like the Marxist, or any other overall view of alienation), though unverifiable 'scientifically', most adequately accounts for the evidence of man's incapacity to liberate himself. The Biblical account of the fall of man discerns a permanent structural fault in present being which man is unable to transcend. All attempts to do so have their roots in the humanist view of humanness and contribute further testimony to the Biblical evidence for ontological alienation.

Paul states that the Gospel is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes. Salvation today depends upon our estimation of the possibility that the root cause of alienation today is adequately explained by reference to the Biblical elucidation of alienation yesterday.

I think this question is answered in an evangelical perspective by the drive for consistency and universality in the fusing together of the Biblical and contemporary horizons.

In order for there to be a hermeneutical circle, there must exist a permanent syntony between the Biblical revelation of man and reality of man today. In other words, the horizons are fused when they enter into a simultaneous syntonic relationship based on universally observed characteristics of man (such as his drive for power, for meaning and his hunger for love).

This relationship has been demonstrated with regard to the persistence of *adikia* in the world (although in this context, the Exodus narrative has sometimes been subjected to a quite arbitrary exegesis to sustain a particular ideological perspective). We believe it is necessary to demonstrate it with regard to the more fundamental *asebeia*. Here the Biblical contribution to an analysis of reality on the human level and the feed-back of this analysis, including the p. 17 Biblical contribution, into the hermeneutical circle will be absolutely crucial, simply because the Biblical diagnosis is unique. We could recapitulate our arguments concerning the bridge between salvation today and salvation yesterday by stating that we believe that the following prerequisites for making the hermeneutical task possible are fulfilled:

- (i) the Biblical explanation of man's alienation from his Creator correctly describes the basic cause of every other alienation. Only a scriptural anthropology is capable of avoiding the persistent human error of confusing effect with cause (particularly in the Marxist account of alienation, however correct it may be at a certain level of analysis);
- (ii) in the course of 2,000 years of history the unique salvation which God has effected and now offers in Jesus Christ (liberation from condemnation, sin, the Law and death) has not been exceeded by any other message, action or movement on behalf of man;
- (iii) man has not evolved progressively in the area of his moral life (his history shows a recurring cycle of great achievements and devastating failures), in such a way that he has been able to develop an effective technique for his own salvation;
- (iv) the present social, cultural and religious features of man's existence presuppose a definite continuity with those to be found in the Biblical era.

The bridge which irrevocably lines the two horizons is man himself and his need of a total liberation. The task of applying the Biblical message would, naturally, be quite impossible, if it could be proved that the external and internal situation of man had changed to such a degree that all continuity had been lost. In such a case the Bible would be a book of only historical and comparative interest.

The truth of the evangelical position does not depend ultimately upon a prior acceptance of the authority of the Bible. The proof which may be offered is that the Biblical Gospel of the Kingdom, as its basic meaning suggests, is heard today, as yesterday, as 'good news' of hope and promise. The Gospel which announces a totally unique salvation is still heard today as a novel message, capable of p. 18 solving man's problems on both a macro- and micro-level.

The application of the interpretation of Biblical salvation today must be done in conscious relationship to man's total reality, however and wherever his alienations are manifested today. Man's present existence, naturally, shows a certain marked discontinuity with regard to his past existence, for to a great extent man is the result of his own historical development (witness the ethical problems thrown up by the 'success' of modern science and economic growth). This development needs to be investigated with the use of technical instruments which man has himself created in the course of his history (anthropology, sociology, economics, psychology and political science), always remembering that these social sciences are not wholly objective, rational enterprises, but show in their analyses of human reality many of the features of man's fallen state.

## CONCLUSION

In many ways, I think, the previous discussion has done little more than wander round the subject (if that). No one is more conscious than me of the inadequacies of the presentation. When faced with this particular subject a feeling of impotence descends which leaves its mark in the form of a series of banal observations which skate along the surface of real problems (and not even mixed metaphors are able to rescue them from triteness).

Perhaps the great superficiality of this attempt to synthesize the way in which evangelicals do, or may, link their particular view of Scripture to the whole question of salvation will rouse us all to a more adequate statement and practice of Biblical interpretation. I will close with a slight development of the main strands of the previous argument which may suggest a suitable jumping-off ground for subsequent discussion.

Earlier we mentioned that evangelicals accepted as a hermeneutical presupposition the distinction between the Church and the world. Such a distinction does not, of course, foreclose discussion about the meaning of either Church or world. Its purpose is to avoid an unbiblical monistic approach to the relationship between human action in history and the Kingdom. Exegetically, it is built on the New Testament concept of the two ages, one of the principle keys for interpreting the meaning and extension of salvation. But the doctrine of the two ages does not allow the Christian the pharisaic [p. 19](#) satisfaction of thanking God that he is alright and despising the rest of men, for it also calls into question any triumphalistic or easy identification of the Church with any particular structures. So the boundary of the Church may also have to be redrawn, so as to avoid easy presumptions about salvation. By this I do not mean that the boundaries should be extended to include a so-called 'anonymous Church', for I believe that the Gospel always demands a personal call to radical discipleship of the Biblical and historical Christ, implying an unavoidable conversion from all idolatry and self-righteousness through repentance and faith in Christ's finished work of salvation. There simply is no other way of entering the messianic community. Rather, the boundaries may have to be redrawn appealing to criteria which are less tied to institutional considerations and more in consonance with the implications of the reality of the two ages.

So how do we recognize the people of God today? I believe that this is not a question so much about where the Church is formally (i.e. a question about certain structural characteristics of the empirical Church) but about how we may know which groups of people show the authentic signs of belonging to God's people. The reason for making this distinction is to safeguard the principle of obedience (orthopraxis)—'doing the truth'—in our definition of the true Church. To be identifiable today the Church, clearly, must stand in some definite continuity with the original People of God. This latter, in turn, if it is to be recognized as such, must stand in a unique relationship to God's original saving acts expressed in terms of the two ages or the Kingdom. This relationship may be summed up by saying that the Church is recognizable as such when it manifests clear characteristics of the new order which God is creating. This new order is clearly discernible in the New Testament in the twin poles of the operation of grace and works: i.e. wherever God's grace is a reality through faith in Jesus Christ's finished work of salvation, and wherever this grace has established a totally new set of relationships and new action in the face of the mind-set of this world (or this age). The criteria of grace and works interpreted in the light of the presence of the Kingdom remain valid today in the following way:

- (i) God's grace in effecting man's liberation from *asebeia* by Jesus Christ alone remains a fixed reference-point; [p. 20](#)
- (ii) God's grace in effecting liberation from, and new action within, the mind-set of this world will both be constant and vary: for example, the mind-set of the 1st century world included, in differing degrees, legalistic religion, idealistic philosophy,



gnostic syncretism and idolatrous politics. All remain today and require a particular response on the part of God's people. At the same time, the mind-set which has produced today's social problems are the world structures of economic injustice and exploitation based on greed and the desire for power and security;

- (iii) today's empirical Church demonstrates itself as belonging to God's people when it takes relevant action against each one of these manifestations of the *kosmos*, by proclaiming a Gospel of free grace, which is not cheap grace, and by struggling systematically to lessen the injustices of the social order (could we say that these actions are dependent respectively on a 'priestly' and 'prophetic' hermeneutic?);
- (iv) the criteria of recognition cannot be given by the empirical Church (for it is not the Kingdom), but only by the signs of the new age manifested as the contradiction of the *kosmos*, represented as both *asebeia* and *adikia*.

The effective and ultimate bridge between the horizons, to whom the hermeneutical task has been committed by the Lord of the Church, is the people of God, the messianic community. On the one hand, the existence of the text presupposes the people of God and the Bible as already part of God's liberating acts in history; and on the other hand, the contemporary Church recognizes her true identity as she continually consults the original text about the meaning of her mission in the world. In between the two horizons the Church acknowledges a long tradition of Biblical interpretation and hermeneutical practice which may act as either a guide, or a warning, to her task.

The bridge between the horizons can be established, therefore, when this particular people of God listen to the text's communication through the input of the hermeneutical key of the two ages, or the Kingdom, and through the challenge of particular empirical manifestations of the rebellious *kosmos* today.

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# Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: a Critical Evaluation

by CLARK H. PINNOCK

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TO DISMISS Wolfhart Pannenberg as just another German theologian seeking fame through ingenuity and novelty would be a grave mistake. Pannenberg is a Lutheran theologian of rare brilliance, remarkably capable in philosophy, Biblical studies, and theology. He has come out in strong defence of several major themes of classical theology, including the deity, vicarious death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is projecting the most rigorous and ambitious programme of academically oriented theology since Barth, and



like Barth (of whom he is sharply critical) is likely to be remembered as a towering giant in 20th century Christian thought.

Whether we like it or not, German theologians have played a leading role in the creative theology of modern times and will go on doing so, at least until others of us challenge their leadership with work of equal quality and power. Meanwhile, the best thing evangelicals can do, if we hope to mature in thought and reflection, is to engage theologians of Pannenberg's stature in dialogue so as to sharpen our own tools and commitments. Pannenberg welcomes this interaction. He maintains an admirably open spirit toward criticism of his thought and an evident willingness to change in the interests of the truth.

Although he writes with clarity and force, Pannenberg is a formidable thinker for the average person to grasp. He often expresses his thought in long essays devoted to a single aspect of a question, subtle in argument and richly documented. Therefore we are deeply indebted to E. Frank Tupper, a professor at Southern p. 22 Baptist Seminary in Louisville, for giving us a serious, readable, systematic report on the full range of Pannenberg's ideas *Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Westminster, 1973). The book enjoys Pannenberg's own seal of approval. The simplest way for the initiate to get a direct introduction to the texture of Pannenberg's thought would be to read his book entitled *The Apostles' Creed in the Light of Today's Questions* (Westminster, 1972), the title of which points to his central concern: to submit historic Christian commitments to the test of critical thought. All that I can hope to accomplish in this short article is to highlight a few of the basic themes important both to Pannenberg and to us evangelicals.

## A THEOLOGY OF REASON

Pannenberg's advocacy of a theology solidly based on reason is an identifying feature of his position. (His major study entitled *Theology and the Philosophy of Science* is, regrettably, not yet available as I write.) This emphasis is attributable in part to the fact that he underwent a rigorously intellectual conversion from atheism in his university days. Like C. S. Lewis and Malcolm Muggeridge, he travelled a path to Christ that entailed more rational reflection than Christian nurture or emotional crisis. Certainly, his concern from the first has been to oppose all forms of authoritarian theology and to espouse what we might call a 'university theology', open to criticism and intellectually aggressive. To use his own words, he wishes to demonstrate the powers of Christian truth 'to encompass all reality' and 'gather together everything experienced as real' (*Basic Questions in Theology*, II, 1f.). He is deeply hostile to the revolt against reason that has for decades characterized theology and made it a matter of interest only to a ghetto of initiated believers. His basic concern was expressed in another generation and context by L. Harold De Wolf in *The Religious Revolt Against Reason* (Harper, 1949).

Although he studied with Barth, Pannenberg reacted against him sharply on this question. Theology, Pannenberg insists, must subject its truth claims to the canons of rationality operative in the larger human community. It must be able to point to evidences supporting faith instead of only a bare, subjective decision. He is convinced that authoritarian claims are not acceptable in either political or intellectual life. Such claims in theology, he says, clothe p. 23 human ideas in the splendour of divine majesty and place them beyond the reach of critical examination. The result is that the content of theology becomes arbitrary and subjective. We must not, he insists, make the knowledge of God's truth dependent on a private revelation, available only to the members of an esoteric society with its own in-group linguistic symbols. To do this does not exalt the sovereignty of the self-revealing God, as is supposed; it simply directs attention away from God's

objective truth to man's own subjective understanding. Pannenberg's critique crashes down on all versions of dialectical theology; however, it is equally hard on evangelical theology, in so far as it too is often presented in the guise of an authoritarian claim.

Debate has been swirling around this matter of the relation between faith and reason for centuries. Pannenberg has simply emerged on one side of the discussion with a forceful and subtle proposal, attempting to reverse the irrationalist trend from Schleiermacher to Barth that derives revelation from the experience of faith rather than from reason's knowledge of history. If faith is placed in faith, and not in truth, how is faith to be distinguished from superstition or illusion? For Pannenberg, faith and reason are *co-essential dimensions* of the act of a total person. A split between them, or even a ranking of one over the other, is intolerable. He does not leave us under the tyranny of the expert, or with the arbitrary situation of faith projecting its own basis; he wants only to assert the legitimacy of reason's role in the decision of faith.

Pannenberg insists that the Hebrew concept of truth not be suppressed by the Greek view. He does not contrast Hebrew thought with Greek in a simplistic manner but rather calls our attention to the fact that truth for the Hebrews is something that *happens* and is not merely thought out. God's truth is proved to be true to the extent that his promises are realized. Truth thus shows itself in history, and is historic in a manner foreign to the Greek conception. Although the Israelite did not search for truth as a timeless reality behind appearances, he expected it to be proven reliable by the outcome of the future. In the light of this, it would be more accurate to say that Pannenberg has developed a theology of *historical* reason rather than reason *per se*, a point that becomes obvious in his view of revelation as history.

Before moving on to that point, we should note that, paradoxical though it may seem, even Pannenberg's stalwart defence of the [p. 24](#) bodily resurrection of Jesus derives not from his orthodoxy but from his rationality! He is not motivated at all, as evangelicals often are, by a reverence for classical beliefs just because they are Biblical and traditional. He defends Christ's resurrection solely because it seems more reasonable to defend it than to deny it. The demands of the same reason that place him in opposition to a host of other critical scholars also lead him to reject the virgin birth of Christ, to consider many of the Christological titles in the Gospels as post-Easter intrusions, and to be sceptical about various and sundry details in the resurrection narratives.

Just because he insists so strongly that faith must rest on rationally tested foundations, Pannenberg must devote time to the doctrine of the Spirit, which many of his opponents in both dialectical and evangelical circles have used to support the notion of certainty that is inwardly experienced but not externally verified. He is convinced that the doctrine of the Spirit has been misused as 'a fig leaf to protect the nakedness of the Christian tradition from the questionings of modern critical thinking' (*Apostles' Creed*, p. 131). He thinks that scholars have appealed to the Spirit in order to immunize traditional positions against having to face up to critical objections, and to offer believers a cheap certainty indistinguishable from fanaticism.

It is clear that Pannenberg does not wish to deny that faith is the gift of God. What he is concerned to say is that faith cannot be indifferent about its basis, and should not be perverted into blind belief in some authority claim. By recognizing the objective truth content of faith, we rescue faith from the danger of perversion and acknowledge it to be a decision on the sound basis of reliable knowledge. The Spirit is not to be thought of as authenticating an otherwise unconvincing message, or adding to it the plus of personal inspiration. The Spirit of illumination does not create new truth but rather leads us to the truth that already exists in the proclamation of Jesus.

## REVELATION AS HISTORY

A second major defining characteristic in Pannenberg's theology is the important shift from the self-authenticating *word* in dialectical theology to verifiable *history* as the key to the nature of revelation. Besides being directed against Barth's central emphasis on the Word **P. 25** of God, this move is a rejection of both the liberal mysticism of religious experience and the orthodox idea that revelation consists chiefly of infallible doctrinal propositions.

In the seminal book that he edited entitled *Revelation as History*, originally published in 1961, Pannenberg expounded his concept of the indirect revelation of God through history, final and complete only at the end, but indicated in advance by Jesus and the vindication of his claim by the resurrection. He sets forth his highly original yet deeply convincing notion of revelation as history, open to all, located at the end, but realized in advance in what happened to Jesus. God does not unveil his essence to man directly but demonstrates his deity in historical events so that he may be recognized and trusted. In Pannenberg's words, 'In the destiny of Jesus the End of all history has happened in advance, as prolepsis.'

Lest we suppose that he fails to answer the inevitable criticisms raised against such a view, let us look deeper. What about the interpretations placed upon historical events? Do they not amount to a set of doctrines existentially derived?

Not according to Pannenberg, who rejects the sharp distinction between event and interpretation. For him the meaning of events inheres in them. Facts are always experienced in a context in which they have a made-to-order significance, which we discover by casting about in the context of the events themselves. For example, we discover the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus, not by producing an authoritarian interpretation, but by asking what resurrection signified in the Hebrew tradition and to Jesus. Of course, the same event may mean different things to different people, but the process is still not merely a subjective one, because there are objective methods by which to determine and settle the various interpretations offered.

Pannenberg's aim in this is not to deny the importance of word alongside event but to dispute the commonly held idea that the word has a non-historical and basically experiential origin. In this, he is lining up with the theology of Gerhard von Rad, who also advocates seeing the acts of God in the context of the history of Israelite traditions. Pannenberg wishes to refute the idea that the revelatory meaning of the activity of God in history is available only to faith and not inherent in the activity itself, which would make it autonomous and finally ahistorical. Rather than conceiving revelation as the union of event with a supplementary illumination **p. 26** by the Spirit, he sees it as Spirit-directed events, already defined in their original context and continually explicated in the history of the transmission of traditions. Pannenberg does not reject the category 'Word of God' except in its isolated use, outside the unity of event and word. To split up the detection of facts and the evaluation of them is intolerable to him: it makes the Christian message ultimately a human subjective interpretation, and it is the result of a poor historical method.

The startling result of Pannenberg's argument is to make an ally rather than an enemy out of critical history, a *tour de force* by any standard. He intends to rest faith firmly upon historical knowledge rather than upon private revelations or authority claims that have no solid basis. He is well aware that the results achieved by the use of historical evidence are only probable at best, but he holds probable knowledge to be the basis of all human decisions and compatible with the trustful certainty of faith. In any case he cannot see how religious experience or authority can come up with anything more certain or more

probable than this. As for the standard sceptical argument that miracles do not occur and that no amount of evidence could convince the person who is sceptical of the resurrection of Jesus, Pannenberg simply unfolds a carefully wrought historical methodology of his own in which he shows the *a priori* and therefore unacceptable character of such a historical dogma. Again, he defends the possibility of miracle, not in the name of orthodoxy, but with the tools of a properly conceived rationality.

## REVELATION AS SCRIPTURE

Although the evangelical reader appreciates Pannenberg's integrating of word and event into the unity of divine revelation, he is forced to ask further about the *locus* and authority of the word-component. He does this not just because it is the conservative's reflex to do so, but because he sees a weak concept of Scripture leading into the very subjectivity that Pannenberg abhors.

Pannenberg repudiates Biblical infallibility on two grounds. The first is that he interprets it in terms of an authoritarian commitment to the sacrosanct truth of the Bible, independent of rational checks. He opposes, not verbal revelation *per se*, but verbal revelation vouchsafed to a select community that alone recognizes it as [p.27](#) such on the basis of an inward experience. Were he to confront Warfield's position that, just as Jesus' claim to authority was confirmed by his resurrection, so also was his claim for the divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures—an extension of Pannenberg's own historical apologetic—I cannot believe his position on infallibility would be so decisive.

Nevertheless, we cannot overlook his second reason for rejecting it: that critical difficulties in the text also preclude understanding the Bible as the infallible Word of God (*Basic Questions in Theology*, I, 1–14). The only way to dispel his fears on this point is to show by means of patient Biblical scholarship that the difficulties that arise in connection with the text do not refute Biblical infallibility, which is itself soundly based on the testimony of accredited Biblical spokesmen, including Jesus himself (cf. J. W. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, Inter-Varsity, 1972).

A lingering doubt in the evangelical's mind over the theology of Pannenberg relates to a certain depreciation of the category 'Word of God'. It is not that he eliminates it from his thought; in fact, he includes it together with event in an integral way that may improve our own understanding. The problem is that, because of his unnecessary equation of verbal revelation with authoritarianism, he has difficulty giving full weight to the concept of revelation as word, which is nonetheless as prominent in Scripture as revelation in history is. It is simply impossible to subsume under his category 'revelation as history' substantial portions of the Bible such as the wisdom literature, or to incorporate in it so central an experience as God's speaking to Moses before, during, and after the historic deliverance called the Exodus.

My reservations about the 'revelation as history' formula are intended not to invalidate it but to call attention to event and word, which are both genuinely God's acts, the twin foci of his redemptive dealings with mankind. Event and word are to be kept inseparably together and each given full weight and value. The fully Biblical concept of revelation includes the mighty acts of God in history, transmitted through a uniquely inspired medium of interpretation by accredited prophets and apostles. Not to do justice to this full Biblical pattern will lead, almost inevitably, to an undercutting of dogmatic theology through a dissolution of the canon that gives it its norms.

Pannenberg is right to insist, as Warfield also allowed, that even [p.28](#) without inspired Scripture a true knowledge of the divine purpose would still exist as a result of the impact of the divine actions that have irrevocably taken place already in world history. But he is

wrong to imply that divine revelation in fact exists without such an inscripturation when the promise and reality of this divine gift, too, is abundantly plain. Because of his refusal thus far to acknowledge the normativity of the Scriptures over human thought, Pannenberg is forced to make his own reconstruction of the event and meaning of revelation canonical, with all the uncertainty and subjectivity that implies, at least for us.

We evangelicals do not ask that Pannenberg forsake his stance of critical honesty, which we ourselves strive for. We ask simply that due respect be granted to the gift God has so evidently given: inspired written Scriptures, the capstone of that anticipatory revelation which has come to light through Jesus.

## **JESUS AND THE KINGDOM**

In his theology Pannenberg places tremendous stress on the future, seeing in the concept of the coming Kingdom of God the most important truth about reality, a truth that overshadows all others. According to Jesus' message, the future is not an enemy to be feared but the blessed goal toward which history is moving under the hand of God. For some time New Testament scholars have been aware of the apocalyptic element in the teaching of Jesus, but they have been uncertain what to do with it. The idea of an end event in which all the dead are raised and the glory of God is finally revealed for all to see seemed strange to modern thinking and a point of embarrassment to the exegetes.

True to his calling as the reverser of theological trends, Pannenberg has intervened in the discussion, arguing boldly that this very motif in the teaching of Jesus must be recovered as the key of the whole Christian message even for today. Jesus was open to the future God had promised, and calls all men to faith and hope. In a final event at the end of history, God will be vindicated as God of all peoples, and the hopeful longing of all the ages will finally be realized.

Pannenberg has managed to hoist apocalyptic out of oblivion and give it an honoured place in a systematic theology of universal history. One might hope that the centres of interest in prophecy and [p. 29](#) apocalyptic in North American evangelicalism will take note of Pannenberg's contribution in defence of their concerns, and allow him to teach them how to relate their insights to a broader theological context and in a more obviously intelligible and relevant way.

As to the person of Jesus, Pannenberg insists that we develop a 'Christology from below'. This simply means that, instead of starting with preconceived notions derived from authoritative sources such as creeds or even epistles, we should begin with the man Jesus himself and strive to understand what he proclaimed about his own significance. Fortunately Pannenberg, unlike Bultmann, is quite optimistic about what we can discover about the life and ministry of Jesus. The knowledge gained in such an investigation is clear and definite enough, he thinks, to permit confident conclusions that can serve as an anchor for reasoning faith. As a result of his study, Pannenberg presents Jesus asserting a claim to divine authority in the context of preaching the Kingdom of God, a claim that had to be either blasphemy or else the true fulfilment of the promises of God. But this claim to an authority belonging only to God was linked to Jesus' expectation that God would vindicate him in the near future by the coming of the Kingdom and the resurrection of the dead; it was not a bare authoritarian claim devoid of all truth conditions.

Pannenberg's handling of the death of Jesus is much less satisfactory. Although I am grateful for his emphasis on vicarious substitution, I am troubled by his insistence that Jesus had no clear preconception of the significance of the death that lay before him, and was not an active agent in that death. The theology of atonement and sacrifice in the Gospels was read back into the life of Jesus by the post-Easter community, Pannenberg



claims. This view exposes not only Pannenberg's slight regard for apostolic Scripture but also the depth of his radical criticism, which can excise from the text of the Gospels as fundamental an element as the suffering-servant-of-God motif in the life of Jesus. Jesus' final visit to Jerusalem apparently was not to offer himself as a sacrifice for sins; it was only to precipitate a decision regarding his claim about the nearness of the Kingdom and about his own centrality in anticipation of it. The interpretation of his death in terms of atonement was arrived at later. Therefore, Pannenberg strives to expound the meaning of that death on the basis of severely edited Gospels and apart from the rich teaching about the cross in canonical [p. 30](#) Gospel and epistle. Given that limitation, I suppose we should admire the results all the more!

But this view leaves Jesus' execution basically unforeseen, and therefore unclarified in its essential relation to what Jesus did proclaim and, strictly speaking, unnecessary to his mission. It cannot satisfy those who glory in Christ's cross and treasure the teaching of the apostles and, we trust, of Christ himself on it. It does not seem reasonable to me, if I may appeal to Pannenberg's norm, to divest Jesus of the awareness he so obviously possessed as the soon-to-be-offered sacrificial lamb of God.

### ON THE THIRD DAY ...

On the subject of the bodily resurrection, Pannenberg's optimism about the results of 'life of Jesus' research extends to unheard-of lengths, at least in the circles of academic theology. He boldly contends, to evangelical applause, that the resurrection of Jesus can be validated by historical research. In this he contradicts a virtual dogma held by liberal critics, dialectical theologians, and every shade of fideist. Before Pannenberg, the most a prominent theologian could be expected to say was that the resurrection was an event of history; that alone would win him a chorus of abuse from the Bultmann school and other sceptics in the Church and outside it. But to go on and say that the resurrection can be proved to have occurred is breathtakingly bold: it refutes all positivists who see history as a closed system of natural causes and effects and at the same time rebukes a multitude of timid Christian thinkers who retreated decades ago into the safe haven of unverifiable 'salvation history'. For this single achievement, Pannenberg deserves our undying praise and gratitude. Of course, some evangelical scholars have said as much before, but critical scholarship was affected by our weak initiatives about as much as a lion is terrified by a BB gun. At last a major, respected theologian has said it.

And Pannenberg, being the scholar that he is, does not leave it at the level of a bare assertion. He pursues the point at great depth, offering an extensive historical argument in defence of the resurrection and detailing an entire alternative historical methodology that makes room for such a case (*Jesus—God and Man*, Westminster, 1968, Chap. 3). While not suggesting that the issue is beyond controversy, Pannenberg believes that the historical evidence sustains [p. 31](#) the credibility of the Christian message beyond reasonable doubt. Furthermore, he rejects the cynical objection—by Schubert Ogden, for example—that the resurrection, even if it did happen, would mean nothing to modern man. Pannenberg argues strongly for its significance: it validates Jesus' claim, signifies the inbreaking of the Kingdom, and shows that the covenant with Israel is now open to all the nations. Above all, it signifies fulfilment to man, whose being is structured in such a way that he hopes for salvation beyond death.

Obviously, according to Pannenberg, Jesus is a unique person if he claimed divine authority, was raised bodily from the tomb, and is expected to reign in judgement in the coming Kingdom of God. What then is Pannenberg's understanding of the person of Jesus?



The title of his weighty book on Christology, *Jesus—God and Man*, shows quite clearly that he wishes to affirm the two natures of Christ in one person. However, his method of working from Jesus outward, rather than starting with creeds or even epistles, means that Pannenberg attempts to formulate his own statement in terms arising from the historical situation of Jesus' mission. We cannot blame him for that; we wish him well. Pannenberg therefore emphasizes Jesus' communion with God, expressed in his utter obedience to him; this relationship exhibits an identity with the eternal Son or Logos, who eternally stands in this position with the Father. In this way Pannenberg hopes to conceive of the deity of Christ without violating his true humanity.

His efforts in Christology, I think we should recognize, spring not from any impulse to deny the orthodox confession but, quite the opposite, from a strong desire to ground belief in the deity of Christ in original Biblical categories rather than veiling it in more dubious Greek terminology. But this effort, coupled with his reluctance to make use of the rich materials on Christology found in the apostolic writings (a reluctance that springs from his inadequate doctrine of Scripture noted above), inevitably results in some hesitancy and unanswered questions. Yet there is no doubt in my mind that Pannenberg views Jesus' relation to the Father as unique, and that he believes we gain a relationship with God only through communion with him and in hope of the resurrection.

What then is his view of other world religions? In a context of increasing pluralism, this is a question that anyone who, like [p. 32](#) Pannenberg, holds to the finality of Jesus must answer. Can the unevangelized, for example, share in the benefits of Christ's reign, or are they automatically excluded from his Kingdom?

Pannenberg develops two ideas bearing on the issue. First, he argues, in a long essay entitled *Toward a Theology of the History of Religions*, that we should regard other religions not as mere fabrications of man's striving after God but as occasions of the appearance of the same God who revealed himself through Jesus, though they may present him in a fragmentary way, even at times resisting the infinity of the divine mystery (*Basic Questions in Theology*, II, 115f.). Secondly, looking to [1 Peter 3:19](#) and [4:6](#), he argues that salvation is made available in the realm of the dead to those who during their lifetimes never encountered Jesus or the Gospel message. The meaning of Jesus' descent into hell in the Apostles' Creed according to Pannenberg is that the salvation he achieved applies also to the vast multitudes who never came into contact with his story. This view point, I suspect, does not divide evangelicals from Pannenberg so much as it divides evangelicals among themselves. I myself find it basically acceptable.

## THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

With Pannenberg there is no 'death of God' nonsense. Everything hinges on the reality of the sovereign God who has raised Jesus and promised to bring in his Kingdom. In another sharp contrast to Barth, Pannenberg also develops a kind of natural theology without calling it that, based not upon the classical 'proofs' of God's existence but on the nature of man as one open to the future and filled with hope for ultimate salvation. In this Pannenberg is endeavouring to establish a universal point of contact, a preliminary knowledge of God that the Gospel can presuppose. Anthropology is the sphere in which he thinks the question of God arises, and Pannenberg is optimistic that a point of contact can be established with all men in this way. We may expect greater development in this area of his thought.

In understanding God's being, Pannenberg is boldly innovative in conceiving God as the 'power of the future', and at the same time soundly traditional in defending an essential trinity in the eternal being of God. If Jesus was raised from the dead, and is a

revelation of the essence of the true God to be finally manifest at the end p. 33 of history, it follows that the distinction experienced between Father and Son in Jesus' earthly life belongs also to the inner life of God. His serious effort at constructing a viable trinitarian dogma for our time is welcome, and it reveals the essential orthodoxy of his theology. Here is no liberal theologian setting aside the Trinity, or treating it as a mere appendix to the system. Pannenberg can fairly be compared with Athanasius and Augustine, Calvin and Barth, for like them he strives to exalt the triune God and to preserve the divine origin of our divine salvation through Father, Son, and Spirit.

But in the same breath, and without withdrawing my respect, I must register a strong protest at some of the unwise modes of expression Pannenberg has used to draw attention to the importance of the future. I have reference to his striking notion of 'the futurity of God,' in which he is determined to connect God's deity with his rule. 'The being of God is his lordship'. Therefore, until the rule of God is universally established, in a certain sense 'God does not yet exist'. (*Theology and the Kingdom of God*, Westminster, 1969, p. 56.) Fortunately, Pannenberg later explains his meaning. The end of history will reveal God's deity, which until then will remain wrapped in considerable mystery. The future will make evident what has been true all along. If that is his meaning, he would be wise to avoid expressions that obscure it, especially when process theology delights in seeing God as still developing.

There are rich benefits in store for those prepared to enter into dialogue with Pannenberg. A theological genius of his calibre, particularly one who expresses so strong a commitment to the basic Biblical message and expects it to be vindicated in the face of all criticism, is a rare occurrence. Perhaps we ought to note, too, that his theology is not the labour of a solitary scholar working alone but has developed out of a team effort: he and other scholars from various disciplines met together, especially in the early years, to hammer out their positions. Likewise the evangelical theology we need, if it is to prove adequate for our day, will not be written by a 'prima donna' but will arise out of a communal effort.

In essence, Pannenberg's theology is a creative synthesis of the classical Biblical themes and a modern critical posture. That accounts for both the delight and discomfort we feel in our interaction with him. But evangelical theology, represented by *Christianity Today*, is not a monolithic and normative confessional position that can easily serve as a measuring rod for evaluating a theology p. 34 like Pannenberg's. Our roots are legion: Calvinist, Lutheran, Anabaptist, Wesleyan, dispensational, pentecostal, and others linked together by a shared respect for the givenness of divine revelation and the finality of canonical Biblical teaching and by our experience of the grace and command of the Scriptural God. Because our precious unity masks so much important disunity, we cannot with a single voice reply to Pannenberg's thought. His development of a theology of reason, for example, exposes a considerable rift among ourselves, delighting the wing of evangelical opinion that advocates a strengthening of our rational apologetic, and infuriating a fideistic wing that feels something vital is being lost.

The point most certain to gain widespread approval among evangelicals is one that charges Pannenberg with neglecting the inspiration and authority of the Bible, using it only as a historical source, and not submitting to its full cognitive authority. But in most of the other areas, we should think of Pannenberg not as a theologian to refute so much as a respected teacher in the Church who has a great deal to teach us, not least in the singlemindedness and love of the truth he displays in his pursuit of the theological task.

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# Black Theology and African Theology

by BYANG H. KATO

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## INTRODUCTION

I AM addressing you as a Christian African. As a Christian, I have had the experience of new life in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ and his Word, the Bible, come first and foremost in my life. This experience is a categorical imperative for me and other Christians. It is an experience that I would recommend to everyone, and it is possible for anyone to share in this experience.

As an African Christian, I empathize sincerely with all my fellow Africans under any type of bondage, be it spiritual or physical. It is my sincere prayer that the exploited Africans under any regime on our continent will soon find justice and liberation. But my greatest concern is for the three hundred million Africans who have not had the experience of Jesus Christ. It is therefore the responsibility of the 60 million African Christians to share Christ with this vast majority so that they might find true eternal liberation. The main purpose of this paper is to re-emphasize the Christian message and its relevance to contemporary Africa, as opposed to the confusing voices we hear today.

Let me first point out that Black Theology is different from African Theology, though the two concepts are not mutually exclusive.

Black Theology which became evident among the blacks of the United States of America in the 1960s seeks to emphasize black consciousness and thereby discover the dignity of the black man. Black consciousness does not necessarily mean the pigmentation of the skin. Rather, it means an awareness that the particular class of people called black, have been oppressed. 'It is the liberating p. 36 effect of this self-knowledge and awareness that we refer to as Black Consciousness,' writes Nyameko Pityana of Fort Hare University, South Africa.<sup>1</sup> Dr. McVeigh of Nairobi University accurately sums up the concept of Black Theology when he says, 'The primary concern of Black Theology is liberation, and one sees considerable attention devoted to defining the implications of Jesus' Gospel for the downtrodden in the face of entrenched political, social and economic injustice.'<sup>2</sup>

African Theology lays emphasis on the dignity of the African by playing up African culture and African traditional religions. It does not stress blackness or liberation as such. Some of its proponents definitely point out that African Theology is different from Christian Theology. Dr. J. K. Agbeti of Ghana writes, 'The idea of "African Theology" seems

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<sup>1</sup> *Black Theology*, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Presence*, Vol. V, No. 3, 1972, p. 2.

to have been confused with the idea of “Christian Theology” as it may be expressed by African theologians using African thought forms. Thus it is my intention in this article to show that “African Theology” is distinct from “Christian Theology” as it may be expressed by African theologians using African thought forms.’<sup>3</sup>

## BLACK THEOLOGY

### (a) Root Causes of Black Theology

That Black Theology was born in the United States and now is rooted in Southern Africa is no accident. For an ideology seeking to liberate the oppressed, that oppression becomes the root cause. Enslavement of Africans by the whites is probably the worst evil done by one class of people to another. It may be surpassed only by Hitler’s massacre of six million Jews. Until about 20 years ago, American blacks experienced many kinds of humiliation on account of the pigmentation of their skin. Today, 250,000 whites are lording it over the five million African Rhodesians on the false pretext that they are preserving Christian civilization. In apartheid South Africa today, the Soweto black dweller works to provide comfort for the white suburban inhabitants of ultra-modern Johannesburg, but is denied the fruit of his labour. To keep the black man in perpetual [p.37](#) bondage, the racist regime is reported to spend about 5,000 shillings a year for the education of an average white child and about 300 shillings for a black child.<sup>4</sup> It has been reported that in South Africa 378 million U.S. dollars are spent on the education of four million whites and 1.1 million dollars on 21 million blacks.<sup>5</sup> Injustice of this type is one of the evils that have given rise to Black Theology.

While not all oppressors of blacks are Christians, there have been white Christians who have been a party to the system of oppression. Some have justified their unchristian practice from the story of [Genesis 9:20-27](#). They erroneously explain that Ham was cursed by his drunken father, Noah, and the curse has now come upon the black people believed to be Ham’s descendants. Black people are looked upon as perpetual slaves to be ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water’. This naïve interpretation overlooks the following facts:

- (i) The curse for the whole of humanity begins in [Genesis 3](#), and is repeated throughout the Word of God ([Romans 3](#) and [5, Ephesians 2:1-13](#)).
- (ii) It was Canaan, and not Ham, who was cursed ([Genesis 9:25](#)). This curse was never repeated anywhere else in the Scriptures.
- (iii) Jesus Christ has taken away any curse upon the believer ([Isaiah 53:6](#)).
- (iv) Who has received a mandate from God to take vengeance on behalf of God? Though the Lord does use human instruments sometimes to correct his children, taking vengeance is his alone ([Romans 12:19](#)).

While I do not agree with the proponents of Black Theology for reasons to be given later, I fully identify myself with their condemnation of injustice. The search for human dignity is a Scriptural principle. Jesus Christ so values human life that he became incarnate. Not one hair from anybody’s head falls to the ground without God’s knowledge and concern ([Matthew 10:30](#)). Thank God not all white people, let alone all white

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Radio South Africa, June 17, 1975.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Nation*, Nairobi, Sep. 24, 1975.

Christians, have been guilty of dehumanization. In fact, many white people have faced ridicule and even death for the black man. Therefore we should avoid generalizations. Furthermore, we should judge Christianity by [p. 38](#) what the Founder of it has said in his Word rather than by what professing followers have done. The Bible is God's Word. If all men become liars and unfaithful, God remains faithful ([II Timothy 2:13](#)). Black Theology, though raising the right questions, has been carried away by emotions. The Bible has either been cast aside or stripped of its absolute authority. The humanistic ethical principle that the end justifies the means has become the marching orders of liberation enthusiasts. That is why some theologians go as far as justifying violence on the basis of Christian revelation. A closer look at the nature of Black Theology will show that the system as propounded by many of its exponents is incompatible with Biblical Christianity.

## **(b) The Nature of Black Theology**

### *1. It is Reactionary*

Steve Biko of the University of Natal, South Africa, gives the motif of Black Theology in Hegelian terminology: 'The *thesis* is in fact a strong white racism and therefore, the *antithesis* to this must, *ipso facto*, be a strong solidarity amongst the blacks on whom this white racism seeks to prey. Out of these two situations we can therefore hope to reach some kind of balance—a true humanity where power politics will have no place.'<sup>6</sup> According to this thesis, all white people, irrespective of their relationship to Jesus Christ, are the oppressors. Biko describes them as 'irresponsible people from Coca Cola and hamburger cultural backgrounds'.<sup>7</sup> Black people, whether Christians or non-Christians, 'must sit as one big unit, and no fragmentation and distraction from the mainstream of events be allowed'<sup>8</sup> in opposing the whites. A synthesis, or peaceful co-existence, may then result from this conflict.

This approach may fit Hegelian-Marxist theory, but it is not the spirit of Jesus Christ. Christians as the salt of the earth ([Matthew 5:13](#)) should know no race barrier. An African theologian of the 3rd century, Tertullian, spoke in the vein of New Testament Christianity when he declared, 'Christians are members of the third race.' Just as it is wrong for any Christian to support racial prejudice [p. 39](#) and oppression, so it is wrong for the black Christian to lump all whites into one category and condemn them all. Rather than pitting thesis against antithesis on the basis of race, Christians from belligerent camps should stand as the synthesis, with Jesus Christ as the Head of the newly created body, the Church ([Ephesians 4:15](#)).

### *2. It is Relativistic or Situational*

For the Christian, the Bible is the absolute authority on which to base all theological and ethical formulations. Black Theology, however, has human experience as the basic term of reference. Basil Moore writes, 'Black Theology is a situational theology. And the situation is that of the black man in South Africa.'<sup>9</sup> Biko, in rejecting absolutes, writes, 'It grapples with existential problems and does not claim to be a theology of absolutes. It

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<sup>6</sup> *Black Theology*, p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>9</sup> *Black Theology*, p. 5.



seeks to bring back God to the black man and to the truth and reality of his situation.’<sup>10</sup> Says Pityana, ‘Blackness gives a point of reference, an identity and a consciousness.’<sup>11</sup> A popular motto found on many lorries in Nigeria is ‘No condition is permanent’. This is an apt description of the human condition. Man comes and goes. Human struggles constantly shift. Empires rise and fall. If a theology is based on human experience, rather than human experience seeking answers from the absolute Word of God, that theology is as good as a sail boat without sails. John Robinson’s situation ethics which allow immorality, provided that love dictates the situation, have been firmly rejected as being out of line with the absolute teaching of Scripture. Bible-believing Christians should reject Black Theology on the same basis. The absolute Word of God must be the measuring rod of the varying, fleeting situations.

### *3. It is Characterized by Humanism*

It is true that salvation history has man as God’s object of love and care. ‘What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honour’ ([Psalm 8:4, 5](#)). But it is equally true that the Word of God has the final say on man’s nature. The Bible speaks of the dignity of man who is [p. 40](#) God’s appointed ruler of God’s creation ([Genesis 2:28](#)). The same Word describes man’s distorted, dissipating nature following the fall ([Genesis 3](#) and [Romans 10](#)). Black Theology, on the other hand, sees only man’s dignity. It begins with man. ‘It begins with people—specific people, in a specific situation and with specific problems to face.’<sup>12</sup> A theology that begins with man will end there, missing the One who has spoken ([Hebrews 1:2](#)).

The Bible is called upon to conform to what Black Theology has said about man. Mpunzi states, ‘Black Theology has no room for the traditional Christian pessimistic view of man, the view that we are all by nature overwhelmingly and sinfully selfish.... This pessimism about man is therefore an ally in our own undermining of ourselves.’<sup>13</sup> Human dignity, in the sense that man is the master of his own fate, is the type of dignity being called for. The logical outcome of humanism is a replacement of God with man.

### *4. The Omnipotent God is Dethroned as Man is Enthroned*

The Gospel is described as Black Power. James Cone of Union Theological Seminary, New York, U.S.A. declares, ‘Black Theology puts black identity in a theological context, showing that Black Power is not only *consistent* with the gospel of Jesus Christ, but that it *is* the gospel of Jesus Christ’.<sup>14</sup>

If Black Power, which is described as the secular term for Black Theology,<sup>15</sup> is the Gospel, it is appropriate then to find out what this Gospel has to say about God. Basil Moore has stripped God bare of all absolute attributes derived from the pages of Scripture through centuries of Biblical studies. He argues, ‘Concepts such as omnipotence and omniscience ring fearfully of the immovable, military-backed South African government

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> *Black Theology*, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137–38.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.



and its Special Branch. These, however, are the images learned from Western theology, and their biblical justification is dubious. Black Theology cannot afford to have any truck with these images which lend religious support to a fascist type of authoritarianism. Nor should it lend ear to the pious clap-trap which asserts that man cannot be free, he can only choose whose slave he will be—Christ's or the state's.'<sup>16</sup>

Moore gives the description of the god of Black Theology, made [p. 41](#) in the image of the oppressed crying for liberation. 'Thus Black Theology needs to explore images of God which are not sickening reflections of the white man's power-mad authoritarianism ... God is no authoritarian king issuing commandments and rewarding or punishing according to our obedience or disobedience. Rather, God is discovered and known in the search for and experience of liberation, which is the wholeness of human life found only in the unity of liberating, life-affirming and dignifying relationships.' Moore continues, 'An appropriate symbol of this understanding of God would be that "God is Freedom"—the freedom which has been revealed in our history, the freedom which we do experience despite all that calls us forward infinitely to new and unexplored depths.'<sup>17</sup>

Satan's attempt to usurp God's throne ended in utter failure. Throughout the ages he has also energized man to try to dethrone God. The popular notion of a 'God is dead' theology has been a part of that attempt to 'demythologize' Christian theological language, reducing God to the realm of a created being. This form of idolatry, or rather atheism, is infiltrating the realm of Black Theology. Just because a racist regime has abused power is no reason for us to deprive God, our Creator, of his rightful kingship. The Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has authoritatively declared, 'I am God and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me' ([Isaiah 46:9](#)).

The highest dignity we can bring to our fellow Africans is to invite them to bow to the Lordship of Christ and the Father and join all other loyal creatures in singing, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen' ([Revelation 7:12](#)).

### *5. It Denies Hell*

With God dethroned, man can reconstruct a theology to the delight of the natural man who wants to have his cake and eat it. He wants to live in rebellion to God with impunity. Biko holds that pagan African religions have no hell, so Christianity must be seen in that light. He declares, 'There was no hell in our religion. We believed in the inherent goodness of man—hence we took it for granted that all people at death joined the community of saints and therefore merited our respect. It was the missionaries who confused [p. 42](#) the people with their new religion. They scared our people with stories of hell. They painted their God as a demanding God who wanted worship "or else".'<sup>18</sup> This type of Christianity which allows hell is inimical to the African religions, and is therefore to be rejected according to Black Theology. To reject the fact of hell is to reject New Testament teaching. There are many passages dealing with the subject ([Matthew 5:30](#); [25:46](#); [Luke 16:23](#); [Revelation 1:18](#)). The way out of hell is faith in Jesus Christ here and now, and not a brushing aside of Biblical teaching on the subject.

### *6. It is One-sided*

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>17</sup> *Black Theology*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>18</sup> *Black Theology*, p. 42.

Some advocates hold a view similar to that of the Black Muslims in the U.S.A. Many American Black Muslims teach that black people are the only true human beings. Therefore, paradise is prepared only for the blacks, though a handful of 'human' whites might also be favoured.

Describing another form of Black Theology called Ethiopianist Theology, Dibinga Wa Said of Zaire writes: 'Generally, the idea was and still is that the Black Messiah is at the gate of heaven, and that he is the holder of the keys. Only Black can enter. But under special circumstances, a few *human* whites may also enter depending on the number of seats left in the Kingdom of God, or the New Jerusalem.'<sup>19</sup>

The thought of blackness and oppression so occupy the minds of Black theologians that Jesus is limited to the black oppressed only. Basil Moore writes, 'Jesus as a Jew in first-century Israel was one of the poor, the colonized, the oppressed. Through the incarnation God identified himself in Christ with this group of people. Thus a meaningful symbol of God's identification with the oppressed is to say Christ is black.... In fact, at the beginning of his ministry he identifies his mission as being "to bring good news to the poor (he was poor); to proclaim liberty to captives (he too was a captive); and to the blind new sight; to let the oppressed go free (he was a Jew under Roman oppression); to proclaim the Lord's year of favour' ([Luke 4:18](#)). In other words, Jesus was, though oppressed, a liberator of the oppressed. Belonging to the oppressed, Christ is black.'<sup>20</sup> p. 43

Mokgethi Motlhabi utters a similar defence for blackness as the exclusive substance of incarnation. He writes, 'In Black Theology it is no longer new to point to the fact that it is the black people who are the oppressed of our day, and thus that it is meaningful to speak of the Christ as the one who is identified with the blacks for their liberation.'<sup>21</sup>

Black Theology, along with other humanistic theological systems such as the Theology of Liberation, is anchored in the liberal understanding of the incarnation and liberation. Time does not allow us to delve into these areas. Suffice it to point out that the incarnation of our Lord is the assumption of humanity in general, and this includes both the rich and the poor, the oppressor and the oppressed, the black and the white. The classical passage on the incarnation ([Philippians 2:5-11](#)) indicates that Jesus Christ became man in general. The form of a servant does not depict only a section of humanity, but it indicates the vicarious suffering of the Servant of Yahweh ([Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#)) on behalf of all members of the human race 'since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' ([Romans 3:23](#)). No one race therefore has any monopoly on the incarnation of the Son of God. The incarnation has made all men saveable, but it is only when a person puts his trust in the incarnate Christ who died and rose again to reconcile men to God ([1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#)) that he can be saved.

The concept of liberation is a confusing one today. Beginning with the premise that the oppressed are the sole object of Christ's mission, the liberal ecumenicals go on to limit the goal of Christ's mission to social, political and economic liberation. Jesus Christ said, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord' ([Luke 4:18-19](#)). If this is taken in the narrow sense of Christ coming only for the down-trodden, why did he have any dealings at all with the religious leaders—the Pharisees; the aristocrats—the Sadducees; the wealthy businesswomen—Mary and

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<sup>19</sup> *Harvard Theological Review*, LXIV (Oct. 1971), pp. 501-24.

<sup>20</sup> *Black Theology*, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Black Theology*, p. 125.

Martha; the well-to-do fishermen—the sons of Zebedee; the successful civil servants—Matthew and Zacchaeus? Why did God allow his Son to be buried in the tomb of ‘capitalist’ Joseph of Arimathea? If Christ’s mission was for political liberation, why did he not p. 44 organize a gang resistance to the Roman oppressors instead of urging his followers to go the extra mile ([Matthew 5:41](#))?

It is true that ‘in the Greek world *eleutheria* (freedom or liberation) is primarily a political concept’.<sup>22</sup> But words do not always have one and the same meaning in all generations. For example, the word ‘let’ at the time the King James version of the Bible was written meant ‘hinder’, but now it means just the opposite, ‘allow’. The word *eleutheria*, freedom, does not have just one meaning all the time. Schlier correctly explains, “More concretely the New Testament uses *eleutheria* for freedom from sin ([Romans 6:18–23](#); [John 8:31–36](#)), from the Law ([Romans 7:3–4](#); [8:21](#)).”<sup>23</sup> He further adds, ‘Freedom from sin and from the Law thus includes essentially freedom from the self-deception of autonomous existence by the disclosure of truth.’<sup>24</sup>

While New Testament Christianity respects human dignity and calls for justice, liberation in terms of what Christ came to do must be understood as meaning liberation from man’s fundamental dilemma, which is sin. When Christ talked of freedom, the Jewish leaders thought of political freedom. But he made it plain that he meant freedom from sin ([John 8:31–38](#)). Both the oppressed and the oppressor need this message. The liberated person must therefore see his fellow man as equal before God. The heart of Paul’s social ethics is summed up in [Galatians 4:28](#)—‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’ The unity of believers will provide them a base from which they can launch out into the world full of problems and confusion.

## Conclusion

Theology, which is the science of God and his creation, needs to be interpreted in such a way that it becomes meaningful to the listeners. The Bible should address itself to the black man in his plight. It has done so in pointing out both the dignity and depravity of all men. It is the responsibility of the Christian theologian to bring these facts to the knowledge of the public. If Black Theology is p. 45 understood in that sense, then I am all for it. We should scratch where it itches.

Unfortunately, Black Theology as described in this paper usurps the place of God’s revelation. The proponents have set up human experience as the basis for theologizing. Where Biblical concepts are used at all, they are used only to support the preconceived position of the theologian. I therefore see Black Theology as a worse danger than the western liberalism rejected by evangelical Christians. Rather than adhering to Black Theology, I appeal to my Christian brothers, Africans and non-Africans, to search the Scriptures, and stand by Scriptural principles. According to the Scriptures, believers, under any human condition, are already liberated. ‘For freedom Christ has set us free’ ([Galatians 5:1](#)). But our freedom in Christ should challenge us to seek for justice through peaceful means. It is therefore not Black Theology we need, but the application of Christian Theology to the black situation. It is not a black Jesus or black God, but obedience to the omnipotent God of the Bible.

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<sup>22</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. II, p. 488.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 496.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 496.

## II. AFRICAN THEOLOGY

Time would not permit an exhaustive presentation on this subject. But let me point out the following things.

I see the need of Christian theology addressing itself specifically to the African situation. Such areas as principles of interpretation, polygamy, family life, the spirit world, and communal life should be given serious consideration. African theologians of the first four centuries of Christianity made their vital contribution to the development of theology in the universal Church. Those early African theologians include Origen, Athanasius, Tertullian and Augustine. African theologians today should also make their own contribution to theology for the benefit of the Church universal. If this is our understanding of African Theology, then it is a noble effort worthy of our support.

Unfortunately, many theologians spend their time defending African traditional religions and practices that are incompatible with Biblical teaching. Some recent writers have sought to justify pagan initiation rites. Speaking in support of initiation, Mr. Bongeye Senza Masa of the All Africa Conference of Churches Secretariat concludes: "To summarize what has been said earlier p. 46 in other terms, it may be said that the decision to turn the school into a centre of traditional initiation, where ancestral values are integrated into the modern educational system, might very well constitute a sign of revival for the Church of Christ."<sup>25</sup> Many Christians in Chad have laid down their lives for their objection to initiation rites. I have been to Chad and confirmed from many Chadian Christians that these rites are pagan practices. Yet some African Christian leaders are defending the practice. The burning desire to defend African personality is given precedence over Scriptural injunction.

The sources for African Theology are increasingly becoming African traditional religions rather than the Bible as the absolute source. Dr. J. K. Agbeti writes, 'Consequently when we talk about "African Theology" we should mean the interpretation of the pre-Christian and pre-Moslem African people's experience of their God.'<sup>26</sup> In describing the source of material for African Theology, Agbeti declares, 'Materials about African religion are being collected and collated regionally. From these regional sources could grow later a religion which could be truly called African Religion. It will be from this source that an 'African Theology' may be developed, a theology which will critically systematize the traditional African experience of God and his relation with man, of Man and his relation with God, of the Spiritual universe, of sin, etc.'<sup>27</sup> It seems that Agbeti is advocating a return to African traditional religions rather than expressing Christianity more meaningfully to the African. Other advocates of African Theology do not go as far as Agbeti. Various theologians give their interpretations of what African Theology means. Professor John Mbiti, who has done more original work in this area than other African I know, has said, 'It is all too easy to use the phrase "African Theology"; but to state what that means, or even show its real nature, is an entirely different issue.'<sup>28</sup>

One thing, however, seems certain concerning most of the advocates of African Theology. Philip Turner sums it up well: 'It does not seem to help much to speak of "African Theology". The term is viewed with suspicion because the interest in traditional p. 47 religion associated with it calls up in the minds of many a return to paganism. The

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<sup>25</sup> AACC Bulletin, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> *Presence*, Vol. V, No. 3, 1972, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> John S. Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background*, p. 185.

phrase an “African Theology” has about it, therefore, the quality of a slogan of vindication. It refers first to the attempt to find points of similarity between Christian notions and those drawn from the traditional religions of Africa. Secondly, it refers to the hope that a systematic theology expressed in the language and concepts of traditional religion and culture, may one day be written ... The phrase implies in its popular usage an attempt to amalgamate elements of Christian and elements of traditional belief.’<sup>29</sup>

African Theology seems to be heading for syncretism and universalism. This subject is dealt with elsewhere.<sup>30</sup> Suffice it to sound a note of warning that our search for African personality should not lead us to a compromising position. But this should not be a moratorium on further research on African thought patterns. In our effort to express Christianity in the context of the African, the Bible must remain the absolute source. It is God’s Word addressing Africans and everyone else within their cultural background.

### Conclusion

The term African Theology has come to mean different things to different people. Furthermore, it has the inherent danger of syncretism. The term therefore is viewed with suspicion. It is more appropriate to talk of Christian Theology and then define whatever context we find it related to, e.g. reflections from Africa; the context of marriage in Africa; Christian Theology and the spirit world in Africa. But there should be a continuing effort to relate Christian Theology to the changing situations in Africa. It is only as the Bible is taken as the absolute Word of God that it can have an authoritative and relevant message for Africa. May the Lord help us all to experience the life of Christ, stand by his sure Word of truth, and proclaim it firmly and unmistakably throughout our continent, so that Africa may hear the voice of him who is saying, ‘Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest’ ([Matthew 11:28](#)). p. 48

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**The late Dr. Kato was the Executive Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar and Chairman of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship. He is the author of “Theological Pitfalls in Africa” reviewed elsewhere in this issue. p. 49**

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## The Gospel in a Hostile Environment

<sup>29</sup> *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. IV, pp. 64–65.

<sup>30</sup> Byang H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*.



*by SAPHIR P. ATHYAL*

*Printed with permission.*

AT THE 1974 Lausanne Congress, one of the largest and perhaps most representative gatherings of the Christian Church in history, the assembled Christian leaders from practically all nations of the world, made the following significant assertion:

'It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace, justice and liberty in which the Church may obey God, serve the Lord Christ, and preach the Gospel without interference. We therefore pray for the leaders of the nations and call upon them to guarantee freedom of thought and conscience, and freedom to practice and propagate religion in accordance with the will of God and as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We also express our deep concern for all who have been unjustly imprisoned, and especially for our brethren who are suffering for their testimony to the Lord Jesus. We promise to pray and work for their freedom. At the same time we refuse to be intimidated by their fate. God helping us, we too will seek to stand against injustice and to remain faithful to the Gospel, whatever the cost. We do not forget the warnings of Jesus that persecution is inevitable' (Lausanne Covenant, Clause 13).

Ideally, one should not have to suffer for one's conscience and convictions. But the normal experience of Christians in many parts of the world, throughout the history of the Church, was one in which they were discriminated against and persecuted because of their faith and obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A brief glance at the history of God's people in the past centuries makes this evident. [p. 50](#)

## **1. RÉSUMÉ OF THE HISTORY OF HOSTILITY TO THE GOSPEL**

### **1. Hostility to True Faith in old Testament Times**

The oppression and sufferings that Israel as a nation went through at the hands of other more powerful nations were not for their faith. But within the nation itself during its times of apostasy and spiritual decadence, the prophets and other faithful men of God had to suffer under the rulers and leaders of the nations for their firm stand for the Lord. Jesus called the Jewish leaders of his times, sons of 'those who murdered the prophets' and shed innocent blood from the time of Abel to that of Zechariah ([Matthew 23:29-36](#)). So also Stephen in his trial indicted the members of the Jewish Council, 'Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?' ([Acts 7:52](#)).

While according to the Old Testament accounts several leading prophets enjoyed great freedom in their ministries under God-fearing rulers, most others lived under the threat of their lives. During the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, a great number of faithful followers of God were destroyed except those prophets who escaped by hiding in caves. It is very possible that a great number of prophets and devout men of God were included in the many innocent men that the king Manasseh slaughtered ([II Kings 21:16](#)). During the last days of Judah, Jeremiah narrowly escaped being killed more than once.

### **Hostility to the Jews**

The first time the Jews as a nation suffered severe persecution for their faith was under the Seleucids in the 2nd century B.C. Antiochus IV Epiphanes, in his attempt to unite his Empire under one faith and one culture, used cruel force to Hellenize the Jews. He drove out their legitimate high priests, profaned the temple by sacrificing swine on the altar, and decreed the possession and study of the Law, the circumcising of one's own sons, and



other traditions very dear to the Jews, as offences against the State punishable by death. Some segments of the Jews co-operated with the Seleucids. 'But many in Israel chose to die standing true to their faith and refusing 'to profane the Covenant' ([I Maccabees 1:62–64](#)). With intensified persecution, the Jews united in resisting the Syrians and succeeded p. 51 in establishing temporary independence for the nation under the Maccabees.

The author of Hebrews, at the end of a list of the great men and women of faith during the time before Christ, says, 'Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—of whom the world was not worthy' ([Hebrews 11:36–38](#)).

### **3. Hostility to Jesus and His Followers**

King Herod's attempt to kill baby Jesus was of political, and not religious, motivation. During the ministry of Jesus, opposition to him from the Jewish leaders and the Pharisees gradually increased. He often forewarned his own followers that 'he must suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed', but should rise again from the dead ([Matthew 16:21](#)). His enemies tried to trap him in his speech ([Matthew 22:15](#)), ridiculed him ([John 8:48](#)), questioned his authority ([Mark 11:28](#)), considered him a lawless man, charged him with blaspheming God ([Mark 15:29](#)), and finally arrested him illegally, bringing against him false accusations and executing him by crucifixion.

The early followers of Jesus suffered heavily for their faith from both the Jews and the Gentiles. Central to the Gospel was the belief that Christ was resurrected while the Sadducees, the leaders of the time, did not believe in the resurrection. Stephen was stoned to death by the Jews, and his martyrdom was followed by 'a great persecution' ([Acts 8:1](#)); James, the brother of Jesus, was put to death. Peter was put in prison, destined to be killed. Paul and his followers faced persecution and severe opposition in most places where they preached. Paul's life was such that he was 'afflicted in every way' and while living 'always carrying in the body the death of Jesus' and 'always being given up to death for Jesus' sake' ([II Corinthians 4:8–11](#)).

The members of the churches that were established by the apostles must as a rule have faced hostility and opposition to the Gospel. In writing to the Church at Thessalonica in perhaps his earliest letter, Paul says, 'You suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they (the churches in Judea) did from the Jews' ([I Thessalonians 2:14](#)). p. 52

### **4. Rome's Hostility to the Early Christians**

During the early years of the Roman Empire, various religions that existed within it, though not officially recognized, were tolerated. Christianity came to have a certain freedom and privileges, as it originally appeared to be a sect within the Jewish faith. But when the Gentile converts to Christianity refused to offer incense before the image of the Emperor, and when their number increased to a potential force, Christianity came under suspicion and dislike by the rulers. Until about the middle of the 3rd century the persecution of the Christians remained primarily a local affair administered by the Roman Governor of each district rather than on an Empire-wide basis.

Often Christians suffered under mob violence, and local officials intervened to protect them, for example Gallio at Corinth ([Acts 18:12](#)). The legal basis for their persecution was obscured. They were charged with cannibalism, illegal assembly, atheism, and disloyalty to the State. Faithfulness in their confession of Christ and refusal to deny him, and in his place worship the State gods, was considered 'obstinacy'.

The Book of Revelation makes many references to those who had to suffer. The Apostle sees under the altar the souls of those who were slain for their testimony, awaiting other martyrs to join them ([Revelation 6:9–11](#)). Rome is described as ‘drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus’ ([Revelation 17:6](#)).

Emperor Nero, according to Tacitus, blamed the Christians for the devastating fire that broke out in Rome in A.D. 64. While the alleged offence of Christians in this case was arson and not an offensive belief, Nero’s attitude to Christians set a precedent throughout the Empire for cruel treatment of them.

Pliny in his letter (A.D. 112) to Trajan speaks of the torture and execution of Christians in Bithynia, but Trajan instructs him not to seek out Christians but rather punish those who are brought before him. From the time of Trajan to that of Decius there was no harsh repression of Christianity though Christians were as a rule disliked and several outstanding leaders were martyred. It was Decius who first launched a systematic attack upon Christians. His order in A.D. 250, that all his subjects who would not sacrifice to the State gods should be put to death, brought serious threat p. 53 to the lives of Christians throughout the Empire. Many renounced their faith but many suffered death.

After a short period of less intensive persecution, again Diocletian in A.D. 304 by an edict ordered churches to be burnt, clerics tortured and scriptures destroyed. Severe persecution continued until Galerius’s edict of toleration (A.D. 311) and the time of Constantine, who granted legal recognition to Christianity and freedom to all religions by what is commonly known as the Edict of Milan (A.D. 313). This was eventually followed by Christianity becoming the official religion of the State (A.D. 380), the Church enjoying special privileges, and in turn beginning to use repressive measures against peoples of other religions.

## **5. Christians Persecuting Christians**

Generally, Christianity has continued to be a dogmatically intolerant religion. St. Augustine’s principle of demanding corporal punishment for heretics became the norm for the treatment of dissenters by the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages. There was an intermingling of the powers of the Church and the State, and the Church could use physical force to its own end. The death penalty was meted out to those who did not conform to the Church’s doctrines and practices.

In spite of the spirit of the Renaissance with its indifference to religion, the Reformers as well as the Roman Catholics continued to practise religious intolerance. Martin Luther, T. Beza, John Calvin, and several other key reformers as a rule approved and practised religious persecution of those who differed with them in their convictions. Protestants persecuted Roman Catholics especially in the Lutheran lands. Many from free church groups such as Anabaptists were killed both by Roman Catholics and Protestants.

Because of the persecution of those who were dissident in England in the 17th century, many devout men of God left England, to be followed by the exodus from other parts of Europe, and founded new settlements in the eastern part of America, such as in Maryland under the leadership of Lord Baltimore and in Rhode Island under Roger Williams.

In England the religious Toleration Act of 1689, in order to unite all Protestants against the Roman Catholics, and a series of p. 54 other acts gave increasing freedom to those of various convictions, but excluded Roman Catholics and the Unitarians.

By the 18th century, there was increasing irreligion. The profound influence of writers such as Rousseau, Voltaire and Lessing, and also the American Bill of Rights (1776) and the spirit of the French Revolution (1789), all led to the practice of religious tolerance as the normal policy for the countries of the West in general.

## II. PRESENT-DAY HOSTILITY TO THE GOSPEL

Practically all countries of the world profess to give assent to the following Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed by the United Nations in 1949: 'Everyone has a right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance' (Article 18). But in practice many countries of the world only give lip service to the above declaration, and religious toleration is only on paper.

It seems that all the different types of hostility and persecution that the Christian Church faced throughout its 2000 years of history are all simultaneously experienced by the Christian Church today. This is particularly true with the Church in Asia and Africa. Innumerable are the examples one can cite of imprisonment and torture of Christians by the State, political parties dominated by religious ideologies bringing repressive measures upon Christians, converts from Hinduism and Islam to Christianity being often oppressed or even killed by their own people, and many other forms of persecution today.

Certain segments of the Church are under totalitarian systems of government where religions, including Christianity, are considered a hindrance to man's progress and incompatible with the State policies. Therefore every attempt is made to stamp out the Church. Christians are deprived of their various rights and privileges, churches are closed down, their young people are indoctrinated in atheistic teachings, and many Christian leaders are illegally imprisoned or made to live under many hardships.

In some other parts of Africa and Asia, hostility to the Christian Church arises due to the prevailing strong nationalism. Christianity [p. 55](#) is viewed as a religion of the Western imperialists. With the development of nationalism, there has been a revival of indigenous cultures and values as well as native religions. Thus Christianity is considered to be foreign, unnecessary and even harmful.

The Christian Church also faces hostility today from other religions and religious ideologies. The non-Christian religions during the past decades have gone through revivals and new growth. They have conducted aggressive missionary efforts in recent years and their influence is on the rapid increase both in the East and in the West. Orthodox adherents of these religions are very intolerant of Christianity, and in many countries political policies are influenced by religious factors. Particularly in countries with a predominantly Muslim majority, very little freedom is given to the Christian Church. Evangelism is prohibited, conversion from Islam to another religion is severely punished, and Christians are deprived of their rights.

In certain African countries, tribal movements such as the Mau Mau group, with their fanatical beliefs and convictions, have ruthlessly persecuted Christians. In recent years, many missionaries and national Christians in several parts of that continent became victims of tribal leaders who achieved political power.

Opposition to the Gospel and discrimination against Christians comes from mobs of people and also individuals who are in influential positions such as employers or directors of firms and institutions. This type of hostility is unpredictable and difficult to be controlled by any law. In many parts of Asia in a society where Christians are a minority, their privileges are not recognized. If they do not conform to the standards and practices of the majority, they pay a price for their convictions.

We must make note here of certain subtle forms of hostility to the Gospel which, while they do not appear to persecute Christians, have always been some of the worst enemies of the Gospel. Only two examples need to be mentioned:

First, economic and social oppression of the people. In the so-called open societies and in modern democracies, we find that the bulk of the wealth is accumulated by a small minority of people by which an average man is denied his basic needs of life. Often the Christian Church itself has sided with exploiters of the poor. The prophets of the Old Testament considered justice for the poor, [p. 56](#) the fatherless and widow as an essential aspect of one's knowledge of God ([Hosea 4:1-2](#); [Isaiah 58:6-7](#); [Micah 6:8](#)).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ in its full implication means that we love our neighbour as ourselves, the neighbour being the one in dire need. The emphasis of the epistle of James is that our faith should have a visible, practical implication of what we do for 'the things needed for the body' ([James 2:17](#)). The thrust and the power of the Gospel is weakened when those who advocate it do not have sufficient courage to put the whole Gospel of Christ into action at the personal, social and national levels. Christians often remain as a professing group rather than as a 'prophetic' force.

Secondly, heresies within the Church. False teachings in the Church have done more harm to the cause of the Gospel than hostility to it from outside. Those from outside are easily detectable, but those from within come as wolves in sheep's clothing and deceive many people.

In many segments of Christendom today, the Gospel is explained as primarily or even solely our participation in the progress of man and human development, as Christ works in all spheres to create all things new. This understanding is a distorted one, and essentially a denial of the very core of the Gospel and its offence. Many prevalent doctrines in the Church today are universalistic and humanistic and they reject the authority of the Scriptures. Those within the Church who accept a form of religion but deny its power ([II Timothy 3:5](#)) and dilute the Gospel to fit the world, are the worst enemies of the Gospel.

### **III. FACING HOSTILITY TO THE GOSPEL TODAY**

Widespread persecution for Christ's sake along with the Gospel being proclaimed to all nations, is a sign of the last days. People in the same family would betray each other; Christians would be brought to trial, be beaten up and killed. 'You will be hated by all for my name's sake' ([Mark 13:7-13](#)). These forewarnings of Jesus are being accomplished today, and persecution seems to be on a steady increase.

We cannot create conditions by which hostility will be removed nor make careful preparation to avoid it. But a few thoughts as to how we may better prepare the Church to face hostility and persecution may be suggested. [p. 57](#)

#### **1. Focus on the Real Cause of Hostility**

It is most important that in the suffering of Christians the real cause of suffering is clear, without which their witness becomes distorted. One should not suffer for a mistaken cause. The focus should not be on the wrong issues but rather on the real offence of the Gospel. For example, it is said that one of the offences charged against the early Christians for which they were executed by the Romans, was their practice of cannibalism, a misunderstanding of their custom of eating the body and drinking the blood (of their Lord).

In certain parts of the world, hostility against Christians is due to some grave misunderstanding, and it is pointless if one suffers for the wrong cause. Two examples may be stated.

First, the misunderstanding that Christianity is the religion of imperial Western nations and irrelevant to the rest. One cause of this misunderstanding is the fact that the expansion of Christian missions in the continents of Asia and Africa coincided with the

political aggression and colonization of the Western powers in these continents. Still another reason is that Christians in these regions often uncritically adopt a Western lifestyle, worship forms and patterns, and live a life isolated from their fellow citizens.

The Christian Church of each nation should truly belong to the nation. It should develop an indigenous character of its own. It should totally identify with the struggles and needs of the people whom it serves, and be a servant of the people and not a 'privileged class' by itself. For example, in Asia the Gospel originally came to man in the context of an ancient society within Asia and not of the West. Many of the contexts in which the Biblical messages were given are very close and similar to the contemporary social condition in much of Asia. There is no reason why we should permit through our lifestyle, religious practices, and patterns of theological thought, an impression that our faith is Western-oriented and therefore does not and cannot belong to Asia.

Secondly, the misunderstanding that Christians are otherworldly people with no real interest in the total needs of man. Of course there are many places where the persecution and the oppression of Christians is based on religious issues, but many societies are becoming increasingly secular, or at least indifferent to religion. In such situations, the Gospel we proclaim should take [p. 58](#) a more tangible form in its concern for the total man. The scope of the Gospel covers all areas of Christ's sovereignty and therefore those who belong to the Gospel should be concerned with all areas of man's life, individual and corporate. Therefore the Lausanne Covenant rightly asserts: 'Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty' (Clause 5).

The Christian Church should never give an impression that it is indifferent to human progress and unconcerned about man's development. There is no reason why the Christian Gospel should not be known widely as a dynamic force for the transformation of people and thus for the change of social and political conditions.

## **2. Strengthening and Training the Whole Church**

In times of persecution the top leadership of the Church will be removed, the traditional seminaries and training centres will either be closed or greatly restrained in their activities, and much of the programme of the Church curtailed. The normal liturgical and cultic ministry that many churches give to their members will prove to be very inadequate for upholding the faith of Christians during difficult years. To find strength to remain faithful during oppression and hostility, Christians should be founded in the Word of God. There should be a vigorous programme for giving Biblical training to the whole Church.

Much of the battle in the coming years will be fought at the level of ideologies. The Communist countries take seriously the systematic training of all members of the Party and all others, especially the young people. In the long run this type of indoctrination helps the influence and rapid spread of its philosophy. Likewise the Church should do something to enable each layman to understand clearly his beliefs and convictions.

This means that the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith should be simply and clearly stated in a succinct form in the language of the layman, and taught to all people. The emphasis should be the Biblical basis of these beliefs rather than their orientation to the unfortunate differences between various denominational confessions. It is important also that a renewed emphasis should be [p. 59](#) placed on the memorizing of key Biblical passages. Invariably during times of persecution, Bibles are in very short supply, and the only feeding from the Word of God an average believer can get is from the Scripture passages and verses he has learned by heart.



### **3. Developing Dynamic Small Groups**

Especially under the totalitarian systems there will be drastic restrictions put on the structure and programmes of the organized churches with their bureaucracy and multiple programmes. Church structures will come under serious suspicion. If a few churches are allowed to continue, they will be more like show-pieces run by puppets of the rulers rather than the Church of Jesus Christ. In times of persecution, the dynamism of the Church will be the small groups of believers meeting together for worship and fellowship. The early Christians had such house-churches and nucleus groups which helped to tide them over severe persecutions.

Even when organized and large churches are allowed to function without any serious restrictions, we should develop small groups which become the focus of Christian worship, learning and mutual upbuilding. In small groups Bible study can be done more effectively at the level of ordinary men, and they also will serve as centres for fervent prayer of those who know each other closely and pray with involvement. In such groups there should be an emphasis on personal evangelism, both in study and in the sharing of experiences. Even under circumstances where public teaching and witnessing are prohibited, personal evangelistic efforts cannot be effectively restricted by the authorities.

### **4. Realism with a Sense of God's Power**

The Church should not have any false sense of security or false hopes when it faces the possibility of persecution. It should be realistic but not pessimistic because it has as its resources God's enabling presence and his counsel. This realism can express itself in various ways. For example:

First, the Church should carefully and patiently study the forces of opposition and hostility. If one third of the world's population lives under atheistic communist philosophy and if it is hostile to the Church—there are different forms of communist systems [p. 60](#) and it is difficult to make clear-cut general statements—the Church cannot be an onlooker but should seriously and thoroughly study the system. So also other forces such as nationalism, resurgent religions, heresies that threaten the Church from within, should be thoroughly studied if the Church is to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the forces hostile to it.

Secondly, the Church should learn the lesson from history that in totalitarian systems the leaders of the Church who are approved and often brought into office by the State, will remain servants of the State and often their agents, working against committed Christians who are nonconformists. They become 'the shepherd who destroys and scatters the sheep of (God's) pasture' ([Jeremiah 23:1](#)).

Thirdly, the Church should be clearly warned of the cost of discipleship of Jesus Christ. Its teaching should recapture the Biblical emphasis on the inevitability of suffering and persecution for those who remain faithful to the Lord. In this learning, there could also be exercises of experiments in hypothetical situations of persecutions, such as closing down churches, cancelling Sunday worship services, and dismissing clergy and other leaders, for a period, to encourage small groups and to develop grassroot-level dynamism of faith.

### **5. Participation in the Fellowship of Suffering**

It is one thing to read and tell of the gruelling stories of martyrs who gave their lives so valiantly under the Romans, being fed to hungry lions and being burned as human torches, but it is another thing to be awakened to the fact that the persecution of Christians under no less cruelty and perhaps on a larger scale, is going on today right under our noses.

What is our responsibility to our fellow Christian brothers and sisters who are suffering for the sake of the Gospel today?

Most nations, except those petty ones which are still struggling to grow past their childhood, are very sensitive to world opinion, especially if the opinion is raised in the Third World. Christians in free societies have the responsibility for gathering correct information of religious persecution that is going on now, and exposing it in forms of protest to government embassies and through public media, and thus encouraging repressive governments to uphold basic human rights as agreed upon by the nations of the world. **p. 61** Every effort ought to be made to maintain the question of religious toleration as a key world issue. Even closed societies of the world today can be evangelized through powerful radio broadcasts and the supply of Christian literature in various forms. One major means of assistance we can give to Christians in the totalitarian system is to supply them with Bibles using all means available.

We should pray and work for the release of those who are in prison in the spirit of Onesiphorus, of whom Paul says, 'He was not ashamed of my chains' ([II Timothy 1:16](#)). It is our duty to bear in our bodies the marks of those who suffer and participate in Christ's suffering, looking to the Lord for wisdom in suffering with all who suffer for Christ's sake in all lands. The Biblical exhortation to us is 'Let brotherly love continue ... remember those who are in prison as though in prison with them' ([Hebrews 13:1-3](#)).

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# Prophecy and the Gospel in the Middle East

*by* COLIN CHAPMAN

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*'If you want to know where we are in history, look at the Jewish people. They are God's timepiece and people of prophecy. Part of an eternal clock ticking away as an everlasting reminder that although other peoples or nations may come and go, these people will remain forever. Because that's the way God wants it. Promised it. And planned it. Long ago. He made a covenant with Abraham, promising a large portion of the Middle East as an inheritance for him and his descendants ... The covenant is unconditional Just like his love....*

*As the Jewish people continue to return to their promised land by the thousands, they take part in fulfilling prophecy today. And history tomorrow. Bringing us one step closer to the most important event of all. The return of the Messiah. Because the Jewish people are the people of prophecy, they are the people of the land.*

*And we, knowing Him who made the promise, totally support the people and land of Israel in their God-given, God-promised, God-ordained right to exist.*

*Any person or group of nations opposed to this right isn't just fighting Israel. But God and time itself.'*

SOME MONTHS ago the above advertisement appeared in the *New York Times* over the name of the American Board of Missions to the Jews, and supported by 48 named churches. Shortly afterwards it was reproduced with an Arabic translation and a full page of comment in a leading Arabic newspaper in Amman, Jordan. It should not be hard to imagine the effect that this kind of claim would have on Arab readers in the Middle East. Christians would be embarrassed to find that fellow-believers in the West are so totally [p. 64](#) committed to the state of Israel; and Muslim readers would see it as one further example of Western prejudice which disqualifies Christianity from having any claim to the allegiance of loyal Arabs.

I believe that this interpretation of prophecy is not only unbalanced, but also unbiblical, and therefore creates needless embarrassment for our Christian brethren in the Arab world, and an unnecessary stumbling block for Muslims.

Biblical prophecy is much more than the prediction of the future. The Old Testament prophets did not hesitate to make moral judgements about what was happening in the world around them. Elijah predicted that there would be drought for an indefinite period until he gave the word ([1 Kings 17:1](#)). But he also had to condemn Ahab for stealing Naboth's vineyard ([1 Kings 21:1-25](#)). Amos sought to interpret what God was doing in events of his time ([Amos 3:7](#)) but he also censured the surrounding nations as well as Judah and Israel for their actions ([Amos 1:1-2:16](#)). Jeremiah frequently predicted the return to the Land after the Exile in Babylon ([Jeremiah 29:10-14](#)). At the same time he recommended particular policies to the exiles in Babylon ([Jeremiah 29:1-9](#)) and to the Jews who remained in Jerusalem ([Jeremiah 42:1-22](#)).

When we turn to many of the modern popular books on prophecy, we find this moral dimension is almost entirely lacking. If there is any trace of it at all, it usually amounts to general approval of the establishment of the State of Israel, together with all its policies and actions. These writers seem more concerned to see how events in the Middle East fit into a great historical scheme, than to evaluate the actions of those who are making history. Whereas the Biblical prophets are caught up in the events about which they speak and are involved in the drama as actors, most writers on prophecy write as if they are spectators watching all the moves in a great game of chess, and addressing what they say to other spectators rather than to those who are making the moves.

If our interpretation of prophecy today is to capture the true spirit of prophecy, should it not enable us to make critical judgements about what has been happening in the Middle East? Our preoccupation with the fulfilment of prophecy generally means that we have plenty to say *about* the Jews, but less to say *to* the Jews, and even less to say to the Arabs—particularly the Palestinians who feel that the Christian West still hasn't really grasped that the [p. 65](#) problem of the Palestinians is the heart of the whole Middle East problem.

The key to the Christian understanding of Old Testament prophecies about the Land is to be found in the New Testament. Take this one, from Jeremiah, for example, 'This is the very word of the Lord: The time is coming when I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel and Judah, says the Lord, and bring them back to the land which I gave to their forefathers; and it shall be their possession' ([Jeremiah 30:3](#), NEB). When we look for the fulfilment of prophecies of this kind in the Old Testament we find that one stage of the return is described in the book of Ezra, which begins with a list of all the families which returned 'each to his own city' ([Ezra 1:1-2:70](#)). Some would therefore argue that prophecies of this kind about a return to the land were fulfilled once and for all at the time of the return after the Exile in Babylon in 586 B.C. Others would claim that while *some* of these prophecies were fulfilled at that time, others were *not*, and are therefore still to be fulfilled. Others again would argue that even if the prophecies have been fulfilled once, the

same pattern of exile and restoration has been repeated at other times in history, notably in the 20th century.

Even if we grant that these prophecies could be fulfilled a second time or at several times in history, we still need to ask ourselves: does the New Testament give us any encouragement to believe that this kind of prophecy would be fulfilled again in the future? If we are to be truly Christian in our interpretation of Old Testament prophecy we dare not by-pass the New Testament and argue straight from the former to contemporary events without asking whether the latter gives us any authority for drawing this kind of direct connection.

What we find in the New Testament is virtually a total silence on this particular aspect of Old Testament prophecy. The only verse in the gospels which says anything about the future of the land is the well-known verse in [Luke 21:24](#): 'Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled,' which is frequently interpreted as: 'Jesus predicted that Jerusalem would be occupied by non-Jews until the "times of the Gentiles" were fulfilled. In 1967 the Jews regained control of the old City of Jerusalem after nearly 2000 years of exile from the city. This event therefore marks the beginning of a new stage in God's dealings [p. 66](#) with his ancient people, the Jews, and also a significant stage in the unfolding of God's purpose for history.'

But is it really possible to build so much on this single verse? There are good linguistic reasons for saying that the sentence implies nothing at all about what would happen *after* the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled, and simply concentrates on what would happen *up to* the time referred to. Jesus is saying that Jerusalem will be under the domination of Gentiles until that time, but he gives no clear indication of what would happen *after* that.

Elsewhere in the New Testament Peter, writing to the 'exiles of the Dispersion' in Asia Minor, takes the word 'inheritance', which was generally applied in the O.T. to the Promised Land (e.g. [Psalm 105:11](#)) and uses it to speak of the Christian's inheritance which is in heaven. This inheritance (unlike the Promised Land) cannot be destroyed or spoiled or taken from us ([1 Peter 1:3-5](#)).

Paul speaks at length about the future of the Jews in [Romans 9-11](#). The covenant promises are still theirs ('God's choice stands, and they are his friends for the sake of the patriarchs', [Romans 11:28](#) NEB); and God has a glorious future in store for them (the whole of Israel will be saved, [Romans 11:26](#), NEB). But this future is not tied to the *land*.

The writer of Hebrews, addressing Jewish Christians who are probably *not* living in Palestine, makes no apology for using Old Testament teaching about the land to point to the 'rest' that all of us are called on to enter and enjoy in our present experience ([Hebrews 4:1-13](#)).

John takes up several prophecies from the Old Testament and sees them fulfilled in his vision of 'a new heaven and a new earth'. It is perhaps significant that none of the prophecies he mentions are prophecies about a return to the land; and all his visions need to be interpreted with proper regard to his use of style and symbolic language. Thus for example, Ezekiel's vision of the restored Jerusalem ([Ezekiel 40-48](#)) is applied to the 'new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God ...' ([Revelation 22:2ff](#)). Similarly Ezekiel's vision of the spring of water flowing from the Temple ([Revelation 22:1-5](#)) is taken up by John and interpreted as (the river of the water of life ... flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the city's street' ([Revelation 21:1-5](#)).

If the New Testament writers had nothing to say about the future of the land as such, what are we to conclude? That they took it for [p. 67](#) granted that if ever the Jews were in exile in the future, the prophecies about a return to the land would be fulfilled again and that prophecies which had not been fulfilled would still be fulfilled in the future? Surely

the most obvious way to interpret this silence in the New Testament is to say that its writers had ceased to think in these terms.

How could such a radical change of mind have come about? I believe that the answer is to be found in the crucial passage in [Acts 1:6–8](#). The disciples put to Jesus a question about the status of the Jews in relation to their own land and to the occupying powers: ‘Lord is this the time when you are to establish once again the sovereignty of Israel?’ They were still longing for the day when the Jews would have their own independent kingdom in the Promised Land.

And how did Jesus answer? ‘It is not for you to know about dates or times, which the Father has set within his own control ...’ I take this to mean that Jesus wanted his disciples to banish once and for all any concern they had for the sovereignty of the Jewish State—or if they were still concerned about it, to separate it entirely from their thinking about the Kingdom which he was seeking to establish. His Kingdom was to be spiritual, not territorial; international and not national. The primary task of the disciples was to bear witness to Jesus to the ends of the earth. If Jesus did not want his disciples *then* to know about these dates and times, is there any reason why we as his disciples *now* in the 20th century should expect to know the answer?

Christian interest in the fulfilment of prophecy has certainly strengthened the support for a Christian ministry among the Jews, but it does not seem to have led to any concern for Christian witness among Muslims in the Arab world. I cannot help feeling that much of our interest in the fulfilment of prophecy in contemporary events in the Middle East represents a reversion to the old attitude of the disciples, and therefore stands in need of the same firm but loving correction from the words of Jesus.

The original promise given to Abraham spoke about the land, about his descendants and the nation, and about blessing for all the families of the earth ([Genesis 12:1–3](#)). Each element of this original promise was repeated and reaffirmed on several occasions in the book of Genesis and at other stages in the Old Testament. But how did the New Testament writers think about the fulfilment [p. 68](#) of these promises? The clearest indication is to be found in these two sayings of Paul: ‘If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise’ ([Galatians 3:29](#)); ‘All the promises of God find their Yes in him (Jesus)’ ([II Corinthians 1:20](#)).

The New Testament writers believed that every strand of Old Testament prophecy pointed to the person of Jesus Christ. Great significance is usually attached to the promise that the land would be given to Abraham and his descendants ‘for ever as *an everlasting possession*’ ([Genesis 17:8](#) RSV). But this promise is in principle no different from the promise that God would establish the throne of David ‘*for ever*’ ([II Samuel 7:12–13](#)). If the New Testament writers saw no difficulty in seeing this prophecy fulfilled in the person of Jesus ([Luke 1:32–33](#)), then there is no reason why there should be any difficulty in referring promises about the *land* to the *person* of Jesus in exactly the same way.

If the promises given to Abraham have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus, it follows that believers in Jesus inherit all the privileges of the people of God. Jesus therefore speaks of the apostles as being the twelve patriarchs of the new Israel, when he says, ‘And now I vest in you the kingship which my Father vested in me; and you shall eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones as judges of the twelve tribes of Israel’ ([Luke 22:29–30](#)).

Peter is therefore able to apply to Gentile Christians titles which originally belonged only to the Chosen People: ‘You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, and a people claimed by God for his own, to proclaim the triumphs of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. You are now the people of God, who once



were not his people: outside his mercy once, you have now received his mercy' ([1 Peter 2:8-10](#) NEB).

If all the promises find their fulfilment in the person of Jesus, do we have any reason for saying that the promises about the land are in a completely different category from all the others?

We observe as a historical fact that in this century there has been a great flow of Jews returning to the land of Palestine. But I find nothing in the New Testament which enables me to say without hesitation that this event is a direct fulfilment of particular prophecies. Peter had no difficulty on the day of Pentecost in saying '*This ...is that* which was said by the prophet ...' I can see no reason why we should be so certain that *this* which we observe today is a fulfilment of *that* ... [p. 69](#)

I have often puzzled over the story of the person who asked Jesus to take sides in a family quarrel: A man in the crowd said to him, 'Master, tell my brother to divide the family property with me.' He replied, 'My good man, who set me over you to judge or arbitrate?' Then he said to the people, 'Beware! Be on your guard against greed of every kind ...' ([Luke 12:13ff](#)).

If this was a simple case of injustice, with a man refusing to give his brother his legitimate share of the family property, we might expect Jesus to take sides immediately and to support the man in his demand for justice. Luke's account is remarkably brief, and we are left wondering if this is all that Jesus said. Did he, for example, go on to discuss the issue in greater detail and investigate the case? Or did he refuse to get involved in any way?

We don't know, because Luke doesn't tell us. But what is clear from this account is that Jesus did not immediately take sides—not because he wasn't concerned about justice, but because he wanted to tackle the deeper issues that lie beneath the surface. So he spoke about covetousness. But who was doing the coveting? Was it the other brother who was holding on to the whole of the property? Or was it this brother who, even though he had a legitimate right to the property, was motivated primarily by selfishness and greed? Again we don't know. It could have been either, or it could have been both.

A modern version of the same incident might read like this: 'An Israeli in the crowd said to him, "Master, tell my Arab neighbours to let me live in peace in the land of my fathers ..."' Or it might begin: 'An Arab in the crowd said to him, "Master, tell the Israelis to give us back the land which they have taken from us ..."' It is hard to imagine that Jesus is not concerned about the rights and wrongs of every human situation—not least in the Middle East today. But I believe that if he were approached in this way today, he would see clearly the rights and wrongs on both sides. I doubt if he would immediately take sides with one against the other; he would probably go to the underlying issues, and have something to say to *both* the Israeli *and* the Arab.

Those of us who are personally involved with the people of the Middle East long for a word which is truly prophetic, with all the dimensions of true Biblical prophecy. It therefore needs to be addressed to *us* more than to those who look on as observers. It needs to see clearly the rights and wrongs of *all* the parties that have [p. 70](#) had a share in the conflict and be able to point to 'the things that make for peace' ([Luke 19:42](#)). It needs to enable us to read the Old Testament through the eyes of the Jewish and Gentile writers of the New Testament. It needs to point us all—Christian, Jew and Muslim—to the person of Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfilment of all the gracious promises of God to man. He alone is our peace.

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*Christianity on Trial*, by COLIN CHAPMAN. (Lion Publishing, 29–33 Lower Kings Road, Berkhamsted, Herts, U.K.)

This is a presentation in three books of the evidence for Christian belief today. The approach is positive and committed. It is also open. The reader is left to make up his own mind to answer the question, “How can we know if Christianity is true?” The books are attractively laid out and profusely illustrated. [p. 71](#)

## Discerning God’s Hand in Islam Today

by VIVIENNE STACEY

*Reprinted from Missiology: an International Review (July 1976) with permission.*

CHRISTIAN STRATEGY is to discern the will of God and to do it. This applies to individuals, as well as to Churches and fellowships; it applies to today as well as to tomorrow. Nothing of itself is strategic—neither the towns nor the villages, neither the students nor the newly literate, neither leadership training nor radio evangelism.

Strategy can be considered in abstract. But Christian strategy essentially concerns something happening—now ... somewhere ... to people. Christ was the first strategist of the Way. He was born at a particular place, at a particular time, and he influenced particular people. Herod recognized something of the national strategic significance of Christ’s birth and tried to liquidate him. Pilate, years later, failed to realize the universal strategic significance of Christ’s life and washed his hands and tried to maintain neutrality.

We read in [1 Chronicles 12:32](#) that the children of Issachar were men who ‘had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do’. This implies an effort to discover what God is doing in this world. Clearly, God has a time programme. In the fulness of time, Christ was born ([Galatians 4:4](#)); in due time he died for the ungodly ([Romans 5:6](#)); and in the dispensation of the fulness of times he will gather together in one all things in Christ ([Ephesians 1:10](#)).

There seems never to have been an adequate Christian answer to Islam. According to figures given at the International Congress on Worldwide Evangelization (Lausanne, July 1974) and also according to Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi at the Muslim Foreign Ministers Conference (Jeddah, July 1975) there are over 600 million Muslims in the world today. (Mr. Kaddoumi was the representative [p. 72](#) of ‘Palestine’.) Apart from a movement into the church in Spain in the 13th century and large movements in Indonesia in our time there have been no large responses to the Christian message in the Muslim world. It would

seem logical and surely for the glory of God and the vindication of his Son that many Muslims should find Christ before history reaches its consummation in Christ. Let us therefore try to see what God is permitting in the Muslim world and what he is actively doing through his Church.

## MUSLIM BUILD-UPS

Much as we can praise God for what he is doing in Indonesia we have in the end to look closely at the centre of the Islamic world. Arabic, after all, is the language of the Qur'an. The principal nations involved would seem to be: Saudi Arabia, the religious centre of Islam, protector of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina; Egypt, the intellectual centre; Pakistan, the political expression of Islam; and Libya, the revival centre. From these centres, a Muslim build-up is occurring before our eyes.

### Politically

An Islamic summit conference was held in Lahore, Pakistan in February 1974. Thirty-seven countries were represented. An article by Mohsin Ali in the *Pakistan Times* of March 1, 1974 describes the major achievements and suggests that 'the Declaration of Lahore inevitably invites comparison with the Declaration of Rabat,' issued September 25, 1969, after the first Islamic summit. At the earlier summit, 24 Muslim states 'and the Muslim community of India', apart from resolving to 'strive for the liberation of Jerusalem', had contented themselves with a tame appeal to the world to ensure Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories. At Lahore, on the other hand, the Conference declared that 'full and effective support should be given to the Arab countries to recover, by all means available, all their occupied lands'. Further, in a separate resolution, the member states of the Islamic Conference Organization have pledged 'to take action in all fields to force immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal'.

Beyond this united sabre rattling, the Lahore summit can point to several other major achievements according to Mohsin Ali. p. 73 (1) A united recognition, for the first time, of the Palestine Liberation Organization headed by Mr. Yasser Arafat as the 'sole legitimate representative of the Palestine nation' and a call for 'the restitution of their full national rights including their right to return to their homeland and to self-determination'. (2) Establishment of an eight-member experts committee (Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and the United Arab Emirates) to devise ways and means for eradicating poverty, disease and ignorance from member states, ending exploitation from abroad, regulating the terms of trade, ensuring full control over their natural resources, etc. (3) Close identification with the African struggle for emancipation. (4) Reconciliation between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

But even beyond these specific items, this second summit was deeply significant in the opportunity it afforded one King, one Sultan, three Amirs, 13 Presidents and six Prime Ministers from 37 states of the world of Islam to come together on a common platform, know one another personally and become acquainted with the problems, stirrings and aspirations of the different parts of the world of Islam—from the sands of the Sahara to the rain-forests of Malaysia.

Another illustration of the political coming together of Muslim nations is the conference of 40 foreign ministers of Muslim lands held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in July 1975. Their unanimous resolution calling for the expulsion of Israel from the United Nations (July 16, 1975) is a forceful reminder of the aspirations of the oil-rich Arab nations and the potential of religious fervour stimulating political and economic policies.

### **Economically**

The radio, TV and press focus enough on the oil question so one need say little here. In the Middle East in 1935 the oil production was 11.49 million long tonnes of oil out of a total world production of 225 million long tonnes. In 1965 the Middle East production was 415.2 million long tonnes out of a total world supply of 1549 million. In 1975 over a third of the world oil was produced in the Muslim lands of the Middle East. This volume of wealth is rapidly transforming the desert lands. Saudi Arabia plans to spend \$142 billion (£67,000 million) on her next five year plan, 1976–1980. The implementation of this calls for much skilled, semi-skilled and **p. 74** unskilled labour, much of which must come from other lands. Saudi Arabia must have been surprised by the results of its first ever census held in September 1974. The figures show a total population of 5.9 million. The U.N. estimates had been over 8 million. Saudi Arabia's crisis of manpower is therefore heightened.

### **Religiously**

Islam is a missionary religion. Recently the Saudi Arabian Government offered the Government of Pakistan \$12 million for building a mosque in Islamabad. I have seen a mosque outside Beirut built by donations from Muslims in Kuwait. Later this year we will see the opening of the new Mosque in Regents Park, London. I have personally met Muslim missionaries in Pakistan: a Saudi Arabian revival team and Jama'at-e-Islam literature distributors. The text of the World Muslim Organization Conference held in Mecca 1974 is becoming widely known with its analysis of Christian missionary strategy and its outlining of Muslim objectives. As Robert L. Nicklaus observed:

The record number of pilgrims at Mecca in 1974 was evidence that the combined stimuli of Middle East oil and politics have revitalized the Moslem religion ... Christians in the third world from the fast growing Church in Africa to the newly converted thousands in Indonesia, will find that Middle East oil wells and battlefields have upped the cost of discipleship. Christians in the financially troubled Western World will find that intensified sacrifice is needed if their efforts in world evangelization are not to be outdone by a well-heeled, resurgent Moslem missionary movement (1975).

Turning now from what God is permitting to what he is positively doing in our time, we must assume that God, the Sovereign Lord of history, is fulfilling his strategy—a dynamic activity of his Spirit in and through the body of Christ for the revealing of the glory of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There are at least three areas of probable divine strategy to which we must pay great attention. **p. 75**

## **MIGRATIONS AND DISPERSIONS**

In the Bible at least three dispersions of God's people are mentioned. For economic reasons some Jews did not return from the Babylonian exile. They maintained a distinctively Jewish way of worship thus unconsciously attracting idolaters towards a purer form of worship. A couple of centuries later Alexander the Great conquered the known world, spreading his Greek civilization. Under economic pressure Jewish migrants went to main cities like Alexandria and settled. They forgot their Hebrew and so the Old Testament was translated into Greek for their benefit, producing the translation known as the Septuagint (LXX). Later many other peoples also benefited from this translation. In Acts we read of a third dispersion—Jewish Christians scattered through persecution. The earlier dispersion groups in Pontus, Bithynia, Galatia and numerous other places formed

the stepping stones from which the Gospel was preached in these districts. The primary factors in the Jewish dispersions were politics, persecution and economics.

What is God's purpose today through the dispersion of peoples? There are 80 Korean churches in Los Angeles. Is Israel a State, or a dispersion, or both? Nearly 15 million Chinese, 5 per cent of the total population of South East Asia, are dispersed in South East Asia—called, by some, the Jews of the East. Gurkha soldiers from Nepal, refugees from Tibet, Indians and Pakistanis in the U.K.—and in the oil-lands of the Persian/Arabian Gulf—are just some of the present-day dispersions.

If God is in charge of dispersions it is not only so that people may be reached with the Gospel, but so that they may reach out with the Gospel. The Gospel goes on circular roads and not like one-way traffic. That great book on evangelistic strategy states with all the authority of inspiration:

He created every race of men of one stock, to inhabit the whole earth's surface. He fixed the epochs of their history and the limits of their territory ([Acts 17:26](#) NEB).

### **Petro-Migrations**

Asians are mostly stay-at-home people. In general, Asian emigration has been a result of compelling poverty, political oppression or religious persecution. But as we've seen above, the new oil wealth [p. 76](#) means that some newly developing countries will now be open to all the influences of the modern world. And since their development plans call for skilled and semi-skilled help from many nations, a percentage of Christians will inevitably be included.

There are probably six million Indians abroad; something less than half a million Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Of the Indians in the Persian/Arabian Gulf a large number are Malayalam speakers from Kerala—India's most educated state where 50 per cent are Christians. It has been encouraging to see new government hospitals in the Sultanate of Oman manned by keen Indian Christian medical personnel, together with a few Pakistanis. Saudi Arabia has extended a welcome to 20,000 Korean workers. One remembers that Korea is 10 per cent Christian.

It is interesting to note from the Church of England Newspaper (August 1, 1975) that the Anglican Church in the Middle East is being reorganized this month into four dioceses: Jerusalem, Iran, Egypt, and Cyprus and the Gulf—together forming the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East. The report states that:

The Gulf States have a large and increasing expatriate population and there are now more Anglicans located there than in the other three dioceses of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East. According to the Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf, the chaplaincies are barely adequate to cover the need, but in young, ecumenical and forward looking communities the work is exciting and dynamic.

Westerners are, of course, a part of the migrations into the Gulf. Advertisements are constantly appearing in the *Nursing Times*. For example: General Duty Nurses, Saudi Arabia, £4,000 + p.a.; Matron, £450 per month, Rashed Hospital, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Recently a large number of U.K. doctors and teachers have been acquainted with job opportunities in the oil states. This suggests that Christian 'seculars' should be a growing part of any strategy to reach Muslims. 'Seculars' could ...

- (i) Do a two-year stint in such a job and earn most of the money as a contribution to Christian missions thus helping to solve the financial problems caused by inflation.
- (ii) Prepare by study of Islam and methods of church planting [p. 77](#) for such a stint of service in fellowship with a nucleus of others planning to do the same.



In summary, there is perhaps a greater significance than has been realized in the dispersions in oil lands of the Middle East. A prognosis on immigration patterns is important as a guideline for Christian strategy. Cannot more Christians from East and West join for other reasons in the development purposes of the oil lands? And let us all pray for God's dispersions, remembering that they nearly always include Christians.

## **REVIVAL OF RELIGION**

My reading of [Joel 2:28-32](#) is that before the consummation of all things the world situation will get worse, but even so there will be significant outpourings of God's Spirit. Revival could affect the centre lands of Islam in two streams:

### **(1) Revival in the ancient churches**

This would have a profound effect. And there is some evidence of this in the Coptic Church in Egypt. Most of the ancient churches in the Middle East were there before the rise of Islam. As Bishop French pointed out in the last century, they are like dry river beds where the streams of living water can flow again. Wherever people are constantly checking their traditions, their lives and their teaching by the Bible, revival situations occur.

### **(2) Revival of the churches of the subcontinent**

Something occurred at the General Missionary Meeting of the Centenary Keswick Convention that I found interesting. Without previous consultation, both Mr. D. J. Richard, an Indian speaker, and myself, representing Pakistan and the Muslim world, stressed the need for revival—and the conviction that God would bring it. Revival streams from India and Pakistan would affect the dispersion communities in the Gulf areas.

Consider this possible mingling of revival streams—those from the ancient churches and those from the subcontinent—in, say, Libya where there are 35,000 Copts and 22,000 Pakistanis, some hundreds of whom are Christian. Anyone wishing to consult a brief handbook on the ancient churches should read *Rediscovering Christianity Where It Began* (Horner 1974). [p. 78](#)

## **TOTAL MOBILIZATION OF CHRISTIAN RESOURCES**

We are indebted to H.L. Fenton for clearly stating that it is a 'myth' about missions to say that a few go, some give and all pray. He restates the Biblical position that all go, all give and all pray. We are all Christian disciples of all nations called to make disciples of all nations ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)). Let us state this categorically—all disciples are to make disciples. There is no special aura around missions—they are one instrument. Christianity is a 'going religion'. Disciples make disciples—this is total mobilization—no leaving it to the clergy; no leaving it to the missionary. This also means no closed lands. No land is closed to missionary work if there is a disciple of Christ there.

The theme is world evangelism by dispersion journey. Jesus' ministry is fulfilled in journeying—the pilgrim Son of God proclaiming the Gospel to the Jews, but with his face set to Jerusalem and the cross. Acts continues that journeying theme of the Gospel. The risen Jesus, now speaking and acting through the Holy Spirit in the life of this pilgrim people, continues to journey. The Gospel itself receives a new name that indicates its travelling nature: 'The Way'. This is Luke's unique designation for early Christianity: journey language to describe a journey Gospel.

We may agree that there be a total mobilization of Christian resources, but where does strategy come in? We are always crossing new frontiers and it would be presumptuous of

me to outline a strategy for the Muslim world today. However, everything is not new. We must at least plead for:

- (i) A greater co-ordination between Christian radio and TV programmes and Christian publishing houses. Do they complement and support each other?
- (ii) A new look at literature to reach the masses. We must not allow our natural conservatism to prejudice our consideration of new visions and methods.
- (iii) Wider circulation of the Scriptures in language meaningful to the Muslim. We must examine the implications for the Muslim world of the 14 per cent cut in the British and Foreign Bible Society funds.
- (iv) A preparation for revival by the spreading of materials and the preparation of further materials. One test of real prayer for revivals is whether in faith we are actively preparing [p. 79](#) for it and for the consolidation of the church. One lesson from the 1904 revival in the Punjab is that no one was really prepared for it and so some of its benefits were lost.
- (v) An examination of new ways to make disciples from the Muslim communities: family to family evangelism; Christian communes and communities which converted Muslims can join and find true brotherhood and fellowship in what is an extended Christian family situation.

## TRAINING

In concluding, I venture to mention what I consider the most strategic area of all—that of *leadership training*. Various sorts of training are given and we rejoice in this but I personally conclude after 21 years in the Muslim world, spent mainly in Pakistan but with an opportunity for travels in 20 Muslim countries, that here is the area of greatest weakness. I suggest:

(1) More training in depth, and more specific training, for *missionaries* going to Muslim areas. A deep knowledge of the Scriptures is essential as Islam is a theologically orientated faith. A knowledge of Islam is needed; but since evangelism is caught rather than taught, far more practical in-service training is needed at home and abroad.

(2) More training for '*seculars*' going to Muslim countries. Why do '*seculars*' not train together and go together? I envisage teams of seculars so trained—some of whom can train others when they arrive in their place of work. No one attempts to climb Everest alone but sometimes a committed servant of Christ goes quite alone to one of the most difficult parts of the Muslim world, and with no real training in mountaineering. No wonder so many are discouraged or ineffective or both.

Could there not be at least one training centre in U.K., one in U.S.A., one in Africa (Nigeria?), one in the Middle East and one in the Far East where disciples of Christ—'*seculars*' and missionaries—go for a short period of training which will involve some actual evangelism? I do not envisage setting up new institutions but using existing ones.

I am working more and more on the principles that Rev. Fouad Accad so ably describes in his address at the Lausanne Congress. He spoke on the theme 'God at Work in Circumstances: personal [p. 80](#) meetings ([Acts 8:26–40](#))' (Douglas 1975:51). One should expect to meet key persons in key places at key times. How else can a comparatively few disciples reach the millions? I have reached the place in my own ministry when I not only expect God to lead me to key people, but when I am trying to teach the principles of evangelism in action I expect God to demonstrate this to my companion also. The amazing thing is that the more one does this with God the more he answers.

The Muslim world therefore needs Christian disciples with a passion for Christ and for people—disciples, whether missionary or secular, who are available to the Holy Spirit,

who are well trained and yet always in training, and who endeavour to train others ([II Timothy 2:2](#)). To my knowledge, ‘seculars’, for all their brains, have not got together in a planned strategy. The mobilization has not been total because there have not been enough in-service trainers of others.

‘The unsearchable riches of Christ’ are greater than the oil wealth. Let us keep on reconsidering the question of training so that we do not fail in the hour of greatest opportunity. For some of us, our God is too small. He is, after all, the God of the impossible. We face the impossible and we face it now. All the odds are against us except that God is God. Winning the Muslim world for Christ is no more impossible than the Incarnation ([Luke 1:36-37](#)).

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## Abstract Article

*Christian Witness Among Muslims*

Africa Christian Press

*This book has been written to help the ordinary Christian to know how to behave towards his Muslim neighbours and how to witness to Jesus Christ among them. For many Christians who need help in the face of Islam and in approaching its followers, this book offers an approach that has already proved its value in various parts of Africa.*

*It is different from other books on the subject: it is in fact called a handbook—a description which is merited by its personal and practical treatment of the subject. It assumes that Christians should seek to understand, fairly and objectively, what Muslims believe and practise. It urges that Christians should have the greatest possible respect and sympathy, and much more love, towards Muslims as persons and seekers after God; but it stresses that all men, no matter how devout and good, need the Gospel of Jesus Christ. [p. 83](#)*

# God and the Nations

by O. R. JOHNSTON

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly changing flux of contemporary debate, all concepts are under critical examination. The philosopher's self-consciousness about language, the political student's delicate nose for the slightest whiff of propaganda and the general suspicion (not without cynical detachment) which greets any kind of instinctive allegiance, spiritual commitment or ideological adherence all combine to form a powerful attitude of critical detachment, a fear of being 'conned', which causes the more intelligent citizen swiftly to react to religious, patriotic or other enthusiastic affirmations, whether to the stream of political indoctrination east of the Iron Curtain or to the stream of commercial advertising west of the Iron Curtain. A wary defensiveness is almost *de rigueur*.

Yet any kind of Olympian detachment is impossible by virtue of our human condition. We are born and bred in time and space with a particularity about each one of us. We are men of a given age and culture and we belong to a given community. In our own case we have to reckon with the idea of nationhood which is woven into the texture of Western European thought. This concept is deeply rooted in the history of our social institutions and our political development over many centuries. Yet some sort of objectivity *is* possible to the evangelical Christian. There *is* a way in which we can scrutinize ideas and institutions, a dual perspective both from inside and from outside. This perspective is rooted in the Incarnation. The New Testament displays a Saviour who is both true Israelite Son of David, suffering servant, the one who fulfils the Law and the prophets, and yet at the same time is the Word made flesh, not of this world, the Man from heaven. This incarnate God is our perfect wisdom. The teaching of his apostles is uniquely authoritative p. 84 and free from error. Thus if we follow Holy Scripture our feet are upon a rock and there is a given firm standpoint from which we may engage in cultural scrutiny of events and ideas which concern us. What is involved in every stage of any such investigation is Christian thinking according to the mind of the Spirit in Scripture. We shall accept some of the received ideas around us (as our Lord and his apostles did) because they are good and true even though they are deeply embedded in contemporary culture. We shall likewise reject other prevalent beliefs and practices because they are clearly condemned by the teaching of Scripture. At other points we shall not so much accept or reject, but rather adopt a different perspective or emphasis from our contemporaries. Our chief task is therefore to establish the Biblical parameters of the concept of a nation.

## II. THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD

It was to an already chosen and favoured nation that the Messiah came. God's Son was an Israelite by birth, education, speech, place of work and ministry, death and burial. He did not suppress or apologize for his national culture; his own mission and teaching were rooted in Old Testament Scripture. Likewise the great Apostle agonized for his brethren, his 'kinsmen by race' to whom belong 'the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises and the patriarchs' ([Romans 9:3-5](#)).

Language, a common location and, above all, religion had held Israel together, a sociologist might tell us. In Biblical thinking it is indeed ‘the gifts and call of God’ ([Romans 11:29](#)) which had marked them out: election had constituted them God’s people—the people *par excellence*. It gave unparalleled strength and persistence to their national consciousness, and such consciousness was God’s inscrutable will and in no way dependent upon their merit or goodness.

By contrast with Israel, Jesus and the New Testament writers (like their Old Testament predecessors) see the other nations as *not* chosen, shadowy entities beyond the gracious light of God’s special revelation in Scripture and in the Person of the Messiah. They can be referred to as ‘the nations’—translated often as ‘the p. 85 Gentiles’—i.e. simply non-Jews. The behaviour of his followers would contrast with that of the Gentiles, Jesus taught ([Matthew 5:47](#); [6:7](#); [Luke 12:30](#)), and the Twelve were not to go to the Gentiles ([Matthew 10:5](#)).

But the scenario of redemption was soon to be dramatically widened. Simeon in the Temple has seen the Son of Mary as bringing a ‘salvation prepared in the presence of all peoples’ and ‘a light for revelation to the Gentiles (nations)’ as well as ‘the glory of Israel’ ([Luke 2:31–32](#)). This was only to take up those Old Testament prophecies which saw blessing flowing out through Israel to every family, tribe and nation—promises adumbrated as early as Abraham ([Genesis 18:18](#)) and made clearer by Isaiah (e.g. [55:4–5](#); [56:1–8](#); [60:1–14](#)). Hinting at this also were the events in the Gospels which point beyond Israel—the visit of the Magi ([Matthew 2](#)), the healing of the centurion’s servant ([Matthew 8:5](#)), the Canaanite (or Syrophenician Greek) woman whose daughter was cured ([Matthew 15:22](#); [Mark 7:26](#)) and the Samaritan leper who was cleansed ([Luke 17:16](#)).

The dark pivot on which this wider blessing to the nations hinges is the rejection of the Messiah by his own people. Solemn statements about the greater willingness of Tyre and Sidon to repent ([Luke 10:13](#)) and Nineveh’s greater responsiveness to Jonah ([Matthew 12:41](#)) are followed by parables and explicit predictions of the coming repudiation of Jesus by the great mass of Jews, as a consequence of which the good news of the Kingdom will be given to ‘a nation producing the fruits of it’ ([Matthew 21:43](#)). After the resurrection the command is explicit—‘repentance and remission of sins’ ([Luke 24:47](#)) and the message of discipleship based on the Gospel ([Matthew 28:19](#)) are now to be proclaimed ‘to all nations’. [Acts 10](#) and [11](#) show the crucial breakthrough in apostolic thinking and practice in the case of Cornelius—the Gentiles are now ‘granted repentance unto life’ ([11:18](#)) because God’s people are to be found ‘in every nation’ ([10:34](#)). In Pisidian Antioch Paul and Barnabas ‘turn to the Gentiles’ ([13:47](#)) and in Lystra Paul affirms a Gospel for all, though prior to the coming of Jesus God had ‘allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways’.

On this basis the elect are now a new multi-national community, ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation’—the very terms used of Israel, now applied in a spiritual and eternal sense to those who are born again by God’s Word and Spirit, adopted into his p. 86 family and sure of a heavenly inheritance. Every man, woman and child who believes, from whatever cultural background they may come, shares these blessings which outshine differences of age, sex, social status and earthly nationality—‘there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ ([Galatians 3:28](#)). This is our common standing in grace, since ‘the blessing of Abraham has come upon the nations (Gentiles)’ ([Galatians 3:14](#)).

Yet the children of God through faith still bear the marks of different cultures, still retain sexual and related personality distinctions, still exist in given communities with particular social structures. Grace is more wonderful and more important. But grace does



not abolish nature. What can we say of those persisting differences of history, language, culture, historical destiny and physical constitution which together we identify as 'national'? What of the providence of God beyond the sphere of the Gospel—his inscrutable ways with races and communities? If Paul was proud to assert his 'secular' citizenship in given situations ([Acts 22:25–28](#); [23:27](#)) as well as boasting of his racial and his spiritual nationality ([Romans 9:4](#); [11:1](#)), and if all events are significant in the providence of God, then the persisting modes of human group consciousness and group interaction cannot be irrelevant.

### III. SCRIPTURE, HUMANITY AND THE NATIONS

There is throughout Scripture a given pattern of human existence which is often assumed rather than taught, implicit rather than formulated. God's world is fundamentally good—its fallen quality is seen in those distorted, incoherent and rebellious elements specified in Scripture. This pattern is what is sometimes known as the created order. Today's restless secular humanist strand of social analysis has caused us to question as never before those tendencies and forces, often below the level of conscious acceptance or rational principle, which have hitherto caused particular modes of behaviour and social organization to persist, and to change only slowly and almost imperceptibly. Sexual roles, status roles and national identity—precisely those three orderings which according to [Galatians 3:28](#) the Gospel transcends!—are a matter of intense discussion in many circles. Yet, as the rest of the New Testament makes clear, **P.87** these three dimensions of human existence remain and bring particular duties and responsibilities. They are not abolished.

The broader question is therefore: is there, explicitly or implicitly, any divine ordering for the human race besides those of the family, the Church and a certain necessary organization of political power over larger groups to restrain evil in communal life and to secure life and property and the maintenance of order?

A convenient starting-point is the well-known statement of Paul at Athens which seems to hold in tension the two parallel principles which this paper wishes to affirm. The Apostle asserts that the Giver of life and breath to all

- a. made of one (sc. man/blood) every nation of men, and
- b. fixed or determined appointed (allotted) seasons and the boundaries of (their) habitation (dwelling place).

The statements here are given in an evangelistic context, and the emphasis is upon the unity of mankind as descended from 'one' (Adam) and upon the fact that all men possess—despite their diversity—a desire to seek God, their Maker and Sustainer; this search is over when men hear the command of the Gospel to repent. But it is noteworthy that even in this context of a universal Gospel for the one human race, the national factors of historical change and geographical differentiation are mentioned. The principal thrust would seem to be the assertion of God's providential control over all the manifest differences between tribes, nations and races, and over the rise and fall of cities, empires and civilizations. It is a *Sovereign* God who is being preached to the Athenians.

Clearly this passing reference is to a whole series of beliefs and assumptions to which Paul—or Luke the reporter—can only allude briefly. But the roots of these beliefs lie firmly where we might expect to find them—in Old Testament Scripture.

(1) *The unity of mankind* is clear from [Genesis 1–3](#) and from the commentary on it in the light of redemption in [Romans 5](#). Furthermore, the new start after the Flood reiterates and expands the principles of God's dealings with mankind as a whole, and with the realms of nature ([Genesis 9](#)). Immediately afterwards follows the 'table of nations'—the

tribes and individuals springing from Noah's three sons, from whom 'the whole earth was peopled' ([Genesis 9:19](#)). Humanity is reconstituted after the Flood into a manifold world of nations. Three times we note the distinguishing marks of the differing p. 88 groups which emerged over the centuries—land, language, family and nation ([Genesis 10:5](#), [20, 31](#)).

(2) *Linguistic diversity* is announced in [Genesis 11](#) as a phenomenon of judgement to confound and to humble man in his arrogance. At Babel men were separated by incomprehension and scattered abroad ([Genesis 11:9](#)). This scattering process is referred to in majestic terms in Deuteronomy, where language reminiscent of [Acts 17](#) is used: 'When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of men, he fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God' ([32:8](#)). Yet in the very next chapter with the call of Abraham the seeds of a new unity are sown. Grace is always at work after judgement. There is to be 'a great nation' ([12:2](#)) and a land for them ([12:7](#)).

(3) *Israel develops against a background of nations*. As the nations rise and fall during Old Testament history they are, as has often been remarked, usually of much interest only to the inspired writers in so far as they impinge upon the history of salvation. They are there to warn and chastise Israel, for they are the agents of the Lord in correcting his erring people. He can deliver Israel—as he did supremely when they 'stood still and saw the salvation of the Lord' ([Exodus 14:13](#)) at their escape from Egypt. He can permit Israel to be overthrown and taken into exile. He can also use heathen nations to protect and bless Israel—he disposes of kings, emperors and conquerors as he sees fit. The Cyrus passage in [Isaiah 44:24–45:7](#) is followed by the picture of the potter and the clay ([45:9–13](#))—the most lofty assertions of God's sovereignty over all nations near and far.

(4) *The nations themselves* are sometimes seen by the prophets as under the judgement of God for inhuman behaviour—pride, corruption and violence—against which even their own consciences ought to have registered protest. This righteous judgement is seen in brief and elementary form in [Amos 1–2](#), but is later extended by the major prophets to include Egypt ([Isaiah 19](#), [Jeremiah 46](#), [Ezekiel 29–32](#)), Ethiopia ([Isaiah 18](#)), Babylon ([Isaiah 13–14](#), [21](#); [Jeremiah 50–51](#)), Philistia ([Isaiah 14](#); [Jeremiah 47](#); [Ezekiel 25](#)), Tyre ([Ezekiel 26](#)) and Sidon ([Ezekiel 28](#)). It is made clear in this way that nations without the light of special revelation are nevertheless held to be distinct social entities with communal responsibilities, above all a deep moral accountability to the Judge of all the earth. In one remarkable case a Hebrew prophet preached p. 89 repentance in the capital of a pagan kingdom and God's blessing on his labours resulted in judgement being withheld. The preaching of Jonah is a vivid testimony to the moral solidarity and responsibility of the Gentile nations in Old Testament thinking.

(5) *National diversity and distinctiveness is given*. There is no indication in the Old or New Testament that the diversity of nations will be or ought to be replaced by any unified international order in which nationhood is absorbed. As Barth writes 'Christian ethics cannot espouse an abstract internationalism and cosmopolitanism' (K.D. III 4 ch. 12 par. 54.3). The suggestion is rather that, far from merging their identity in a common humanity, each can enjoy and share the particular blessings which it has received while remaining itself. (This is not dissimilar from the blessings of the sons of Jacob in [Genesis 49](#) and [Deuteronomy 33](#)). There is a positive and fruitful aspect to human diversity between nations, just as there is between individuals. I cannot forbear to quote Solzhenitsyn's Nobel Prize lecture here: 'The disappearance of nations would impoverish us no less than if all people were made alike, with one character, one face. Nations are the wealth of mankind, they are its generalized personalities; the smallest of them has its own particular colours, and embodies a particular facet of God's design' (*One Word of Truth*,

1971, pp. 15–16). It is remarkable that at the consummation of all things, our Lord Jesus Christ sees ‘all nations’ arraigned before the glorious throne of judgement and separation ([Matthew 25:32](#)). And beyond that the vision of John is not that of a city of identical inhabitants, but rather a richly variegated community lit by the Lamb and the glory of God—‘by its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations’ ([Revelation 21:24, 26](#)). The ultimate destiny of the faults and weaknesses of each nation is perhaps hinted at in the final chapter, where the leaves of the Tree of Life are seen to be ‘for the healing of the nations’ ([Revelation 22:2](#)).

(6) *World rule is not desirable*. The last four centuries have witnessed the emergence of the nation-state, in which cultural distinctions are supported by political power and territorial limits. But is the nation-state any more than a more precise and clearly delimited realization of what we have always called a nation? Is it now a menace to human development? Some assert that it is. There is much talk today of an international order, of the need for p. 90 world government in order to ensure world peace, of the folly and dangers of nationalism and of the need to acknowledge the fact of an interdependent world community. In the light of the picture which Scripture paints it would seem that any aspiration to abolish the constituent elements of nationhood must be treated with caution. This is not simply because power corrupts, and with today’s methods of persuasion and the control of world communications, total global servitude is by no means impossible. Nor do we treat this idea with reserve because the proletarian internationalism of Marxism is the strongest contender for the theory, the favoured winner of the race to assume leadership in practice *and* the most powerful force for tyranny known in human history. It is rather that Scripture knows of only one divinely approved international community—that founded at Pentecost when the curse of Babel was for one brief moment inoperative, so that ‘frontier Israelites’—fringe members of the Jewish faith but from other nations and cultures—should hear the Gospel. Cultural distinctions were not abolished—each man heard *his own* language ([Acts 2:6](#)). The barrier of language differences was not eliminated—it was miraculously *overcome* by gifts given to the apostles. We still—post-Pentecost—live in a world of cultural and linguistic differences, though Christian experience in the Church gives a foretaste of the glorious liberty of the sons of God beyond this age, where communication will be totally unhindered. The abolition of nationhood has an element of arrogance in its attempt to remove given features of human existence which have a rightful place in the created order—only sin must be opposed and eradicated. Linguistic differentiation may be, in one aspect, judgement—but it is not sin. National identity—like any particular social structure—can be the seat or the occasion of sin. But its existence cannot be said to constitute transgression of the divine law. Indeed, [Revelation 13](#) suggests that if and when world government does emerge, it is likely to be the most ghastly force for inhumanity and persecution that history has seen, and that idolatry and total control of trade and economic life will give this Satanic power the ability to wreak hitherto undreamed—of havoc upon the Church of Christ ([Revelation 13:7–8, 16–17](#)). The Roman Empire may well be one fulfilment of this vision. But we have yet to see its total embodiment.

(7) *The dangers of nationalism*. There is, then, an acceptance of national identity and diversity in Scripture. But there are warnings p. 91 to be sounded. The nations, Barth points out, do not appear in the crucial foundation chapters, [Genesis 1–9](#). The narrative conceals their existence, though they may have been there. Barth is unwilling for this reason to grant nationhood the status of ‘an order of creation’. He concludes: ‘we cannot deduce a true command of God the Creator, or a distinctive obedience owed to it, from the mere fact that there are nations and that man lives in them ... (K.D. IV 4 ch. 12 par. 54.3). In the same discussion he points out how the reverence for nationhood as a determinate

over-arching principle of social life ethics led from the apparently innocent and enriching aesthetic platform of Herder and the Romantics to the racial theories of National Socialism—to nationalism as an absolute principle, and therefore demonic. Nationalism is no more the key to the understanding of history or society than is social class. Each can turn into rebellion against God and become the tool of every kind of violence and inhumanity. People, blood and race must never be seen as distinct creations or sacred ordinances. Barth warns against the temptation to ‘obliterate the distinction between creation and providence, between the divine command and the divine disposing’. Only the command constitutes a clear duty and an overriding obligation. This leads me to my fourth and final section.

#### IV. PROVIDENCE, PRAYER AND THE NATIONS

Every Protestant Confession asserts the sovereign control of God in providence over every event in time, in accordance with the teaching of the Old Testament prophets, of our Lord himself (e.g. [Matthew 10:29](#)) and of the New Testament epistles (e.g. [Ephesians 1:11](#)). The Christian is meant to live with confidence in the hand of God, who sustains and governs all things, rather than as a prey to the message of meaninglessness so prevalent today, or to any version of the juggernaut evolutionary theory. God sustains and God rules.

Sustaining is more than maintaining—it is rather an active grip which holds everything together ([Colossians 1:17](#)), an energizing upholding ([Hebrews 1:3](#)) without which all things would disintegrate into unimagined chaos and darkness. And to sustain the universe is also to guarantee the continuance of ‘a moving unfolding unlocking process, revealing continually a gallery of diversity’ (Berkouwer, p. 92 *The Providence of God*, 1952, p.67). Thus we are led to process with a purpose—God’s purpose—and hence to the other aspect of providence—God’s active rule or government. Nations exist by and under his providential sustaining power (as our earlier discussion made clear)—but they also emerge, develop and fall according to his sovereign purpose.

Neither in the case of individuals nor in the case of nations does providence rule out responsibility. Men and communities are held accountable for their rebellion against the law written in their own hearts, idolatry, violence and other forms of wickedness. Evil is woven into the divine plan and can mysteriously be turned to good, as supremely in the death of Jesus, boldly announced by the apostles as bringing both deadly guilt and a glorious salvation ([Acts 2:23](#); [3:15](#); [4:28](#)).

But what may we know of this government of the nations? Here we face the problem posed by the particularity of divine revelation. All events are deeds of God in the providential sense. But his servants the prophets and apostles give the accredited and inspired explanation of the mind of God—his divine purposes in the happenings which they announce beforehand, comment on as they happen or explain *post eventum*. This sure word is now silent in our own day. Only the great symbolic certainties of the book of Revelation span the Gospel age.

Moved by the Holy Spirit ([II Peter 1:21](#)), Old Testament leaders and seers were enabled with finality to reveal the divine purpose in the rise and fall of nations. The coming of Jesus was in the fulness of time, with the nations prepared in many ways for the Gospel. The decree from Caesar Augustus and the powers and jurisdiction of Pilate and Herod were all used at the focal point of divine redemption. But since then there is no infallible interpreter of the finger of God in history. ‘It is often forgotten that we have not been given a norm for explaining the facts of history, and that in the absence of a norm only an untrustworthy plausibility remains’ (Berkouwer *op. cit.*, p. 171). Certainly prosperity and success are not always a mark of God’s blessing and approval, nor is

disaster a mark of his wrath or judgement. The Psalmist and Job wrestled with that problem at a personal level. The resolution of that perplexity is only glimpsed in the Cross.

On the national level, though there is now no nation which has inherited Israel's favoured position, the same moral principles as were revealed in her history may be used in spelling out national [p. 93](#) obligations. We can with confidence affirm certain obligations—the challenges to humanity and justice, to obedience to the divine law and to responsibility. We can announce the warnings of Scripture, and assert the ruin eventually brought about by transgression. Thankfulness for blessings and deliverances, just and compassionate use of power and resources, persistent self-examination in disaster or breakdown—these are universal duties. We shall not be able to interpret the finger of God in every event. Only as the great end-event approaches will there be seen certain recognizable signs among the nations—increasing tumult, war and famine, earthquakes and persecution, false prophets and cold hearts—and the universal preaching of the Gospel ([Matthew 24:3–14](#)) to all nations. Thereafter the mystery of iniquity will be revealed before the final day ([II Thessalonians 2:1–12](#)). This is no timetable, but again—as is the general doctrine of providence itself—a general view of history to be received by faith and used as a stimulus to faithful testimony and perseverance.

Christian prayer is therefore not that we should *know* what God is doing or will do with any nation or nations. It is rather an asking for the eye of faith to discern *my* duty—or the Church's duty—in whatever nation we find ourselves. Nations favoured with centuries of literacy and a Bible in the language of the people, a long history of Gospel preaching, a series of revivals, etc. will surely bear greater responsibilities in view of the privileges they have enjoyed. Some individuals may be called to positions of power at crucial junctures, like Daniel and Joseph, even in pagan nations. All Christians can and should pray for their rulers, as [I Timothy 2:1–2](#) reminds us to do so forcefully. And in those prayers we may often find ourselves wrestling, not with flesh and blood, but with darker and more mysterious forces—spiritual beings associated with particular nations, as the book of Daniel hints ([10:13](#), [20–21](#)). If the duty of prayer for the nation (prayer which cannot be lacking in penitent identification for our complicity and that of our churches in our communal disobedience) were more widely known and preached, the providential hand of God might well change the direction of this nation, as indeed of any other nation for which earnest prayer was made, for God is no respecter of persons. Providence is a fact that we accept—but only in faith and by faith. Prayer we may not exclude—for rulers and communities. The answers to our prayers we may not always discern. But they *are* answered, and that his hidden hand is upon the destiny of nations—of that we may be sure.

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## Which Way to Utopia: With Marx or Jesus?



by CHRIS WIGGLESWORTH

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BOTH CHRISTIANITY and Communism believe in the ultimate and *inevitable* victory of good over evil. In that sense both point man to Utopia'.<sup>1</sup>

While rejecting the way to Utopia charted by Marx and his followers, we would do well to look closely at what they have written. Evangelical Christians are usually poorly informed about Communist teaching and on its theoretical basis in particular. Mao Tsetung frequently quotes Lenin's saying: 'Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolution' and it follows that without an understanding of Marxist theory we can make little or no effective comment on Marxist policies. The following paper outlines the Marxist view of the future and suggests ways in which Christians should react to this—not to score debating points but to examine our own understanding of the future and to help others to a Biblical view of life for their own sake and to be of more use to other men and women.

## CLASSICAL MARXIST VIEWS OF THE FUTURE

First, notice Marx writing in 1843 as a young man of 25 about the Prussian state and the German people:

'Man's self-esteem, his sense of freedom, must be re-awakened in the breast of these people. This sense vanished from the world with the Greeks, and with Christianity it took up residence in the blue mists of heaven, but only with its aid can society ever p. 96 again become a community of men that can fulfil their highest needs, a democratic state.

By contrast, men who do not feel themselves to be men accumulate for their masters like a breed of slaves ...

The philistine world is the *animal kingdom of politics* ... centuries of barbarism have produced it and given it shape, and now it stands before us a complete system based on the principle of the *dehumanised world*.'<sup>2</sup>

Marx saw the state as a perverted despotism which denied man his true nature. Produced by developing capitalism, such a society is bound to collapse.

'The existence of a suffering mankind which thinks and of a thinking mankind which is suppressed must inevitably become unpalatable and indigestible for the animal kingdom of the Philistines wallowing in their passive and thoughtless existence. For our part it is our task to drag the old world into the full light of day and to give positive shape to the new one. The more time history allows thinking mankind to reflect and suffering mankind to collect its strength the more perfect will be the fruit which the present now bears within its womb.'<sup>3</sup>

Marx wanted to free men from their suffering by showing them the new world which will be born out of this old one, a new society of true community. The way to help is by taking part in the struggle of the poor to exist and in making them aware of how society

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Oestreicher in *What Kind of Revolution? A Christian Communist Dialogue* (London, Panther Modern Society, 1968), pp. 192–93.

<sup>2</sup> In *Letters from the Franco-German Yearbooks*, ET in *Early Writings* (EW) (London, Penguin Marx Library, 1975), p. 201. (All italics in quotes are original.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 205–6.

is changing. Marx, saw behind naïve Utopianism a lack of realism about the change needed:

‘It is not *radical* revolution or *universal human* emancipation, which is a utopian dream for Germany; it is the partial *merely* political revolution, the revolution which leaves the pillars of the building standing.’<sup>4</sup>

He argued that mere political changes are ineffective, that a ‘*total redemption of humanity*’ is called for; and that the only people who can achieve this are the proletariat, by which Marx meant in particular the urban poor formed by the artificially produced p. 97 poverty of industrialization. They must be taught the way to change things and to hasten the inevitable break-up of the capitalist system based on private property. Beyond this lies the new communist society.

This optimistic vision of a young man formed the basis for the tough-minded programme of the Communist Party in Germany, France and Britain as it grew during the next five years or so.

On one hand, it avoided unrealistic ‘utopian-socialist’ views—as Marx and Engels, his collaborator from 1844 onwards, termed the earlier schemes of men like Owen and Saint-Simon—which though influencing them deeply were seen as outdated in the developing European economics.<sup>5</sup>

In fact Marx pointed out that Communism was not the last word but:

‘a *real* phase, necessary for the next period of historical development, in the emancipation and recovery of mankind. *Communism* is the necessary form and the dynamic principle of the immediate future, but communism is not as such the goal of human development or the (final) form of human society.’<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, Marx’s view of the future developed the concept of ‘alienation’ or ‘estrangement’ introduced by Hegel and modified by Feuerbach and the ‘Young Hegelians’. In later writings Marx concentrated on the economic aspects of alienation and his popularizer Engels avoided the concept, but a critique of Marxist views of the future, and also of religion, finds valuable points of contact in Marx’s extensive writings before the Communist Manifesto, which he produced with Engels in late 1847 and early 1848.

Hegel had argued that man created himself in the historical process, that is, in the movement of Spirit towards perfect self-consciousness. In this, man came to recognize the creations of his mind as independent or alienated. Alienation referred to the objectivity of Nature, in which the Spirit was alienated from Reason in bondage to Nature. Feuerbach held that man objectified p. 98 his own essence, separating it from himself to make ‘God’ in his own image—a creature become Creator. Alienation meant a situation in which man’s powers seemed to be realities controlling his actions—a projection personified, man afraid of his own shadow. Once men realized this they could restore to themselves their alienated nature as a human community.

Marx went into the social causes of such alienation, and insisted that the State as an external controller of human society is a more fundamental aspect of alienation, as is

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<sup>4</sup> In *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, 1844, ET in EW, p. 253.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Engels’ later comments in *Anti-Dühring*, 1878 (ET London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1935), pp. 286ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, ET in EW, p. 358—compare ET in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, edited by T.B. Bottomore and Maximilian Rubel (London, Pelican-Penguin Books, 1963), p. 252 (B & R).

wealth in the form of capital—‘the domination of living men by dead matter’. ‘Religious estrangement as such takes place only in the sphere of *consciousness*, of man’s inner life, but economic estrangement is that of real life—its supersession therefore embraces both aspects.’<sup>7</sup> So, man is alienated from what he produces, since it belongs to the capitalist; from his work, which destroys his true nature; from his essential humanity; and from his fellow men in the community.

For Hegel it was a spiritual issue and dialectical resolution of alienation was a question of abstract thought: for Karl Marx, a real transformation of society was called for, restoring to each individual his true nature as a social being liberated from bondage. Marx saw this as an affirmation of man’s true humanity:

‘Let us suppose that we had produced as human beings. In that event each of us would have *doubly affirmed* himself and his neighbour in his production. (1) In my *production* I would have objectified the *specific character* of my individuality and for that reason I would both have enjoyed the *expression* of my own individual *life* during my activity and also, in contemplating the object, I would experience an individual pleasure, I would experience my personality as an *objective sensuously perceptible* (visible to the senses) power *beyond all shadow of doubt*. (2) In your use or enjoyment of my product I would have the *immediate* satisfaction and knowledge that in my labour I had gratified a *human* need, that is, that I had objectified *human nature* and hence had produced an object corresponding to the needs of another *human being*. (3) I would have acted for you as the *mediator* between you and the species, thus I would be acknowledged by you as the complement of your own being, as an essential part of yourself. I would thus know myself to be p. 99 confirmed both in your thoughts and your love. (4) In the individual expression of my own life I would have brought about the immediate expression of your life, and so in my individual activity I would have directly *confirmed* and *realized* my authentic nature, my *human, communal* nature.’<sup>8</sup>

The best short summary of their goals in the ‘immediate future’ of human development was given by Marx and Engels in their *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Its basic theme is that history is working inevitably for the establishment of the classless society. Well worth reading in its entirety, its message can be judged from the following:

‘The class struggle nears the decisive hour ... the fall of the bourgeoisie (middle-class) and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable ... the Communists have, over the great mass of the proletariat, the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement ... the supremacy of the proletariat will cause antagonisms between peoples to vanish still faster ...

When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared and all production concentrated in hands of the vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character ...

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class of the antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all ...

The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries unite!’<sup>9</sup>

Out of the experience of the short-lived revolutions of 1848 Marx modified his concept of a violent conflict issuing in a classless society—the last days became lengthened! In one

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<sup>7</sup> In EPM, ET in EW, p. 349.

<sup>8</sup> In excerpts from James Mills’ *Elements of Political Economy* 1844, ET in EW, pp. 277–78.

<sup>9</sup> A recent edition was published in London by Penguin Books, 1967.

of his last works, written in 1875, Marx described two stages in communist society after the coming Revolution had abolished the old bourgeois society with its principle of 'to him that has it shall be given': p. 100

'Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other ... in which the State can be nothing but the *revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat* ... (a society) just as it *emerges from* capitalist society; and which is thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges.'<sup>10</sup>

At this stage, which Marxist orthodoxy later termed 'socialism', the principle is 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work'.<sup>11</sup> Marx recognized the 'bourgeois limitation' that such equality only 'consists in the fact that measurement is made with an equal standard, labour' and that 'equal right is an unequal right for unequal labour'.

In *Anti-Dühring*, his classic popular exposition of Marxism (or, as he called it, 'the dialectical method' and 'the materialist conception of history'), Engels prophesied that after the revolution 'the state is not "abolished", *it withers away*'.<sup>12</sup>

That this has not yet actually happened in any of the 'Socialist Republic' indicates a serious and utopian lack of realism but all the same we would be foolish to ignore the fact that a large proportion of the world has already crossed the line from 'capitalism' to 'socialism', usually through a violent revolution, and we certainly should not underestimate Marxism's appeal to the rural and urban poor of the Third World, and to its many frustrated intellectuals.

## RECENT MARXIST VIEWS OF THE FUTURE—MAO AND MARCUSE

A hundred years after Marx's predictions his followers are modifying his views, especially as hardened into the orthodoxy of dialectical materialism by Engels, who outlived and interpreted Marx for twelve more years, and Lenin, who began active work and writing shortly before Engels died, and Stalin.<sup>13</sup>

Even 'mainstream' Communists make concessions—James Klugmann, a theoretician of the British Party, after describing the future in slightly updated terms:

'Gradually as we move from Socialism to Communism, as the working day is cut, and machines take from man monotonous repetitious drudging labour, as education extends, the gap between skilled and unskilled work will disappear, there will be no essential class differences between work in town and country. The basis will be laid for a classless society without exploitation of man by man, but with free responsible citizens',

then goes on to concede that Marxists over-simplify matters by saying that a revolution changes man into truly socially-minded socialistic man and admits that this view:

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<sup>10</sup> In *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, 1875, on Section 3, ET in B & R, p. 261.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, J. V. Stalin's *Problems of Leninism*, 11th ed. 1940 (ET London, Lawrence Wishart, 1940), pp. 548–49.

<sup>12</sup> ET, p. 325.

<sup>13</sup> For Lenin's views, see *The State & Revolution* (ET 1932), for Stalin's see note 11, and also summaries such as that of Roger Garaudy, see note 19.

'... leads again and again to grievous disappointment, because the sins and crimes and selfish outlooks of class society in general, and of capitalism in particular, do not automatically, nor rapidly, disappear under socialism. Socialism only provides, unlike capitalism, a framework within which they *can* be gradually brought to an end ...

Men and women are not 'changed', *they change themselves*. How many Christian missionaries or Marxist propagandists will be able to tell you sad tales of the rapid relapse of those 'converted' in a moment of sudden enthusiasm!

Men and women fully to develop their manifold capacities need a revolutionary change in society. This is true. *But men and women in action, practice, struggle of changing nature and society change their own nature*. And this is a permanent process. It begins under capitalism, continues under socialism, and will continue under communism.'<sup>14</sup>

In other words, after the Revolution things will slowly get better as people develop themselves. All that impedes them are the relics of life under capitalism!

Mao Tse-tung also sees a struggle extending into the future:

'Marxists are still a minority of the entire population as well as of the intellectuals. Marxism therefore must still develop through struggle. Marxism can only develop through struggle— p. 102 this is true not only in the past and present, it is necessarily true in the future also. What is correct always develops in the course of struggle with what is wrong ... This is the law of development of truth and it is certainly also the law of development of Marxism. It will take a considerable time to decide the issue in ideological struggle between socialism and capitalism in our country'.<sup>15</sup>

But Mao is in no doubt as to the eventual outcome; as selections from his famous *Little Red Book* emphasize:

'The socialist system will eventually replace the capitalist system: this is an objective law independent of man's will. However much the reactionaries try to hold back the wheel of history, sooner or later, revolution will take place and will inevitably triumph ...

We must have faith, first that the peasant masses are ready to advance step by step along the road of socialism ... second, that the Party is capable of leading them ...'<sup>16</sup>

The ultimate transformation of humanity may be a mysterious future 'eschatological event' but there is no doubt about the solid hope it has provided to produce action in the present.<sup>17</sup>

It is when we look at the writings of another elderly Marxist, Herbert Marcuse, that we see admission of problems in the standard Marxist vision of the future. An exiled German academic who caught the attention of student radicals in the late '60s and early '70s, Marcuse is no longer so fashionable but his version of Marxist future speaks to many Western intellectuals. In his *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) Marcuse was uncertain whether Soviet-type socialism could pass smoothly towards the Communist Utopia without a further upheaval, which might or might not take place, since technology by

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<sup>14</sup> James Klugmann in *What Kind of Revolution?* See note 1, pp. 174–77.

<sup>15</sup> In *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*, 1957, ET in *Mao Tse-tung: an anthology of his writings* (New York, Mentor Books, 1962), p. 286.

<sup>16</sup> In *Quotations for Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (ET London, Corgi Books, 1967) which like the 'Manifesto' is well worth reading in its entirety.

<sup>17</sup> See Ninian Smart's comments on 'Mao as a religious leader' in *Mao* (London, Fontana, 1974), pp. 83ff. He suggests a link with the Confucian heritage and instead of immortality 'the indefinite interplay of contradictions'.



creating affluence had made freedom from material want into a means of producing servility. In 1969 he began his *Essay on Liberation* on a more optimistic note. Marxist theory had so p. 103 far refrained from 'utopian speculation' other than specifying 'basic institutional changes' which would lead to a more rational resource-use, reduction of conflict to a minimum and a broadening of areas of freedom. Now this should change:

'I believe that this restrictive conception must be revised, and that revision is suggested, and even necessitated, by the actual evolution of contemporary societies. The dynamic of their productivity deprives "utopia" of its traditional unreal content: what is denounce, d as "utopian" is no longer that which has "no place" and cannot have any place in the historical universe, but rather that which is blocked from coming about by the power of the established societies. Utopian possibilities are inherent in the technical and technological forces of advanced capitalism and socialism: the rational utilization of these forces on a global scale would terminate poverty and scarcity within a very foreseeable future. But we know now that neither their rational use nor—and this is decisive—their collective control by the "immediate producers" (the workers) would by itself eliminate domination and exploitation: a bureaucratic welfare state would still be a state of repression which would continue even into the "second phase of socialism", when each is to receive "according to his needs".'<sup>18</sup>

This important recognition that a revolutionary restructuring of economic and political control does not of itself free men from alienation and repression is of course based on the record of Soviet Marxism from the days when Stalin centralized control in 1929. The French Marxist, Roger Garaudy, provides a detailed discussion of this in *The Turning-Point of Socialism*.<sup>19</sup>

Marcuse sees the question of what a man really *needs* as the key issue. Not only must the satisfaction of his needs be achieved without exploiting other people but also without continuing the individual's own bondage to a system. In other words, it is not now the system that causes servitude but man's own nature. A qualitative change must occur in the infrastructure of man! Marcuse tries to deal with the vital question:

'Is such a change in the "nature" of man conceivable? I believe so, because technical progress has reached a stage in which p. 104 reality no longer need be defined by the debilitating competition for social survival and advancement. The more these technical capacities outgrow the framework of exploitation ... the more they propel the drives and aspirations of men to a point at which the necessities of life cease to demand the aggressive performances of "earning a living", and the "non-necessary" becomes a vital need. This proposition, which is central in Marxian theory, is familiar enough ... Marx and Engels refrained from developing concrete concepts of the possible forms of freedom in a socialist society; today such restraint no longer seems justified ... (yet) the world of human freedom cannot be built by the established societies, no matter how much they may streamline and rationalize their dominion.'<sup>20</sup>

## CRITIQUE

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<sup>18</sup> *An Essay on Liberation* (London, Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1969), pp. 3–4.

<sup>19</sup> 1969 (ET London, Fontana, 1970), pp. 36–7 and 77–139.

<sup>20</sup> *Essay*, pp. 5–6.

While we agree with Marcuse that the establishments cannot produce Utopia, we must also ask whether men's needs will be qualitatively changed by revolution and the biological technology Marcuse goes on to mention in his essay.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, Jesus talked about qualitative change to Nicodemus in the context of entering God's Utopia, if such is a fair description of the Kingdom of heaven. Christ's analysis has been proved to work in the lives of many individuals but there is much confusion over the socio-economic and political relevance of his insistence of radical personal change under the impact of God's Spirit. It is only too easy for the Gospel to be reduced, especially in the interests of mass communication and rapid consumption, to a private spiritual experience for an individual as an escape from this problem-ridden world. The Church has repeatedly given in to such a diluted approach in its religious activities, often combined with a worldly-wise compromise in social matters.

Karl Marx formulated his ideas at such a time. Especially in Germany the Church was polarized into an establishment organization indifferent to the problems of the poor, to whom Christ was invisible and inaudible, and a pietist movement whose limited contact with the working-classes was confined to offering a spiritual [p. 105](#) refuge to the individual soul from the social oppression of men's lives. Against such a corrupted 'gospel' Marx reacted violently:

*'Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself or has already lost himself again ... (Religion) is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion.'*

*Religious suffering is at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of a soulless condition. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their real condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo.*

*Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order that man shall continue to bear the chain without fantasy or consolation but so that he shall throw off the chain and pluck the living flower.'*<sup>22</sup>

It is clear from this classic 'religion is the opium of the people' quotation, just as from the earlier quotes (see refs. 2, 3, 4, and 6–8), that all the time the real enemy for Marx is not religion but the suffering or alienation that the poor endure in a 'heartless world' under 'soulless conditions'. He even implies a concession that religion contains a protest against such suffering. Religion is criticized to the extent that it is indifferent to unjust conditions and ineffective in removing them. Honesty should compel Christians to ask whether this is so different from Isaiah or Amos in God's name rejecting a false and, as such, idolatrous piety which compromised with social injustice as well as private immorality. 'Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates ... seek justice, correct oppression.' 'I hate, I despise your feasts and take [p. 106](#) no delight in your solemn assemblies ... let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.'

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7–22 and also Garaudy's book (note 19), pp. 17–77 for a similar naive faith in technology.

<sup>22</sup> For *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, 1843–44, ET in EW, p. 224.

## A POINT OF CONTACT

It may be significant that at the very time when some Marxist thinkers are showing up gaps and over-simplification in the traditional Marxist theories of the future,<sup>23</sup> there is a rediscovery in evangelical Christian circles of the social and material dimensions of the Gospel. The 1974 Lausanne Covenant provides good evidence for this.<sup>24</sup>

A Christian view of the future has to do justice to the material and corporate aspects of Christ's teaching on the Kingdom (itself a political word) in passages such as the 'Nazareth Manifesto' of Luke chapter 4, where such phrases as 'to set at liberty the oppressed' and 'release to the captives' cannot be spiritualized away.<sup>25</sup> [Romans 8:19–23](#) describes a freedom from bondage in which the creation groans while it waits to be 'set free from its slavery to decay'. This means we have to take the material world seriously. Again, [1 Corinthians 15:35ff.](#) makes it clear that man's resurrection body is vitally linked to his present natural body, with the implication that we cannot think of saving the 'soul only' or of a future body unrelated to the present life.

To Marx's comment: 'We do not transform world problems into theological ones but theological problems into worldly ones',<sup>26</sup> it is no answer to say 'we save individual souls to solve the world's problems'. Even worse is the fascination with prophecy and the Millennium with goes together with an indifference to conditions on the earth now. It is certainly true that all Marxist (or even Christian) pretensions to set up the perfect society on earth here and now by human effort are doomed to failure by the clear Biblical word that the Kingdom will come at God's initiative in God's p. 107 own time. But this does *not* mean that believers are reduced to total pessimism about any social or material expression of God's justice, any more than the fact of a future Kingdom rules out signs of God's rule in the present. We pray for the Kingdom and also work for it as 'light' and 'salt' in the world.

As much as the Marxist, we want 'the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man' and so we will have to be involved with the same practical aspects of alienation for the poor of the world—pavement housing, lack of work in the slums and villages, the oppression of the landless labourers and so on—perhaps alongside the Marxist. At the same time we will point to the deeper sources of self-alienation and the wonderful remedy in the blood of the Lamb.

The poor and oppressed have the first claim on the mission of the Church and the fact that Marxist optimism is changing part of their lives all over the world gives an added reason for the involvement of believers in taking the whole Gospel to the poor as a priority in our work for the future. Faith without works is dead!

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<sup>23</sup> Further examples may be found in M. M. Thomas' recent *Man and the Universe of Faiths* (Madras, CLS, 1975, pp. 112–28) with an interesting discussion.

<sup>24</sup> See especially Section 5, and also such recent books as *The Great Reversal—Evangelism versus Social Concern* by David Moberg (London, Scripture Union, 1973), *The Politics of Jesus* by John Yoder (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1972, a New Testament study of the socio-political aspects of Christ's ministry), and *Saints in Politics* by Ernest Howse (London, George Allen & Unwin, paperback, 1971) which shows the relevance of Wilberforce's evangelical political action today.

<sup>25</sup> See Yoder's book, note 24, for a brilliant discussion of this and in particular the 'jubilee theme' of [Luke 4:19](#)—"The year of the Lord's release".

<sup>26</sup> In *Das Kapital*, Vol. 1, p. 43.

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*The Meaning of Man in the debate between Christianity and Marxism*, by ANDREW KIRK. *Themelios*, Vol. 1, Nos. 2 and 3.

*This learned article is an opener for all those who desire to understand the real issues of debate between Marxism and Christianity. The author aptly points out that we cannot have a real grasp of Marxism unless we understand Marx's critique of religion, particularly of Christianity. It is only then that we can follow Marxist reasoning and analysis. The author shows how two conceptions of man, that is, Marxist and Christian conceptions, are incompatible on the grounds that the former views man in reductionist terms, whereas the latter sees man as the crown of creation. It is by Christian love and witness that we can transcend Marxism. Marxism has no answer to the problem of evil, and therefore is unable to give a sustained analysis of human alienation, whereas Christians know that the root cause of alienation, whatever its form may be, is sin. Christ came to save mankind from the perdition of sin. Christians need not follow Marxist socio-political programmes, for they have their own programme which is given to them in the revealed Word of God. Those who desire to grasp the real nuances of Marxism are strongly recommended to read this article. p. 109*

## **Present-Day Pastoral Work in Latin America**

*by* PABLO PÉREZ

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### **INTRODUCTION**

HARDLY ANYONE doubts that the hour for pastoral work in Latin America has arrived. The information we have concerning the growth of evangelical churches in that continent points to it now more than ever. Large-scale evangelistic campaigns, in churches and cities, the seed that has been planted for more than a decade through nationwide efforts led by Evangelism-in-Depth, the spectacular development of the Pentecostal movement in several countries, and the growing number of believers in the second and third generation, all speak forcefully concerning the urgent need of more effective pastoral work. Moreover, the increasing use of mass media has made the saving message available

to a large number of people who soon after need more adequate attention than can be provided for them through a correspondence course. The large urban centres with their imposing condominiums and poverty belts present complex and formidable challenges both to those who live in them and to those who are trying to minister to their spiritual needs. Students at universities and technical schools are demanding more and improved attention both in their intellectual difficulties and in their many personal problems. Current trends in society which include those of drugs, the political revolutionary challenges, and sexual liberty are constantly haunting believers who in turn demand firm guidelines which are closely related to reality at any moment.

And the list could be increased with a whole set of situations and complex conditions in which our churches are being born, [p. 110](#) raised, and reproduced. These also become a major challenge that the Church cannot ignore at the present time, much less its leaders. And even if we may not believe everything that was said in the previous paragraph, we cannot deny that one of the essential elements for the forward movement of our churches is that of pastoral care. However, if conditions in our countries and their cities are nothing short of dramatic, it is no less important for us to focus our attention upon the real situation in which pastoral work finds itself in the same countries and cities.

For many people the pastoral dimension is one of the distinctive characteristics of the evangelical churches in Latin America, and their pastors, at the same time, are legitimate source of pride for them. For some others that same dimension—even if they do not want to put it that way—is worthy of that simple and humble servant of the Lord who has not had the opportunity to get a higher education. Nowadays famous evangelical leaders are evangelists, seminary professors, magazine editors or denominational officers, but not great pastors. This may account for the general impression in religious circles that the study of pastoral work should not be included as a part of the strict and rigorous discipline of systematic theology, but that it should be considered as something merely ‘practical’. It may be of great value, but it is actually of secondary importance. Nevertheless we should all be confronted both by reality and the Biblical witness concerning pastoral work.

This is because, even if it is true that pastoral work has ostensibly had a major place among us, its hour has come now more than ever, in view of the divine imperative, to make eternal truth known to a continent engaged in epoch-making explosions and in urgent need of positive directives because of the bright promise in a not too distant future. But that initial proclamation also implies a strong consolidation among groups and individuals who in turn can witness effectively to the regenerating work and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit both in their lives and relationships one with another, and in their sphere of action. This means that it must be emphasized that to be the object of grace means to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, just as much as to give of grace and to be fruitful in grace was our Master’s ideal. It is here that the pastoral ministry should occupy the place of prime importance to which it was called. This is also [p. 111](#) where the Holy Spirit will build the Latin American Church of the future. But before that let us look at:

### **I. Pastoral Work at the Present Time**

There is a certain amount of confusion in our evangelical circles as to the meaning of pastoral work. Perhaps one of the main reasons can be found in the names or titles which are used to identify the one who has the task of being the visible leader in our churches. He may be known as pastor, minister, preacher—especially in those places where there is a strong influence from the Southern States of North America—reverend, counsellor, and servant of the Lord. In some other cases he is called ‘the sacred speaker’, ‘the spiritual father’, and even ‘the little shepherd’ if he is young or manifestly unlettered. But to these



titles there are added certain functions which are supposed to be discharged by the same individual. These may be Sunday School teacher, singer, pianist, missionary, evangelist, electrical repair man, carpenter, accountant, and even janitor. He is also expected to have such virtues as simplicity, humility, piety, exemplary holiness and unlimited patience—and of course personal discipline to be able to distribute his meagre earnings, cleanliness and tidiness, intelligence and good manners. And if this is not enough he is also expected to inspire confidence, to 'have lots of personality', to know the laws of his country, to exercise authority without being bossed by his wife, to be a model father and a dedicated husband.

And even if some may consider this to be a laughable and even exaggerated caricature, a visit to a few churches will be enough to realize that we are not far from reality. However, in order to make the task of understanding what a pastor is a little easier, we could very well follow the four categories of the pastoral ministry described by Edward Murphy.<sup>1</sup> According to him they could be called clerical, priestly, paternalistic and professional.

In the first one, the clerical, we find a strong man who leads a church with energy and wisdom under conditions very similar to those of a *caudillo*\* in the political realm. Murphy tells us that this situation can be both advantageous or adverse but it can, in spite of p. 112 this, be used positively. On the one hand, and because in these cases it is the pastor who has this image of himself, there is the risk that his work may be finished after his death. On the other, there has been the case in which that same individual thinks about the future and thus prepares outstanding men from among his followers who are thus enabled to take his place and to continue leading the church wisely even after his death. He will most likely use the same system, but now there may be more *caudillos*. Moreover, there is no need in this case to adapt foreign forms, since the *caudillo* is genuinely Latin American in origin. We should only be extra careful to give the whole set-up a really Christian meaning.

In the second place Murphy tells us about a priestly category. This is when the pastor functions as a salaried priest and consequently not only acts as a mediator between God and the people, but is also under the obligation to perform the work of others. Here is where we find the 'all-round man' described on the previous page, from whom his church demands a great deal of versatility and a multiplicity of tasks simply because 'he is the pastor and that's why we're paying him'. Undoubtedly the effectiveness of a pastor under these circumstances is almost nothing and manifestly contrary to the Biblical principles of the universal priesthood of the believer. This subject will be dealt with more fully later on.

In the third place we see a paternalistic category where the pastor is like a father who takes care of his children in their needs and to whom these same children owe respect and faithfulness. These mutual links are further corroborated by pastoral calls at the homes of the members of the church. Those visited acquire the obligation of regular attendance and contribution to the church. As a result we have a church that lives for itself and that is not too much concerned that the pastor carry on his evangelistic task—much less that the congregation itself do it.

In the fourth place we find a professional category. Here we find the church which is fully convinced that it cannot function properly without a 'full-time' professional pastor who has been trained in a seminary of high repute. There are many churches which simply

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<sup>1</sup> E. F. Murphy, *The Gifts of the Spirit and the Mission of the Church* (Pasadena, Fuller Theological Seminary unpublished thesis, 1971), pp. 112–20.

\* A political chieftain with a type of military following made up of servile people.

cannot tolerate to be without that kind of an individual. Just the same, there are both seminary students and ordained ministers who are not happy in any other type of field of labour than this, and they also expect all the economic rewards that go with it.

And we could go on listing circumstances and categories that would describe pastoral work in Latin America with more details. [p. 113](#) For the time being let us concentrate on those already mentioned since they give us a clearer idea of the present state of this type of ministry—except for some small variations of minor importance. At the same time we should recognize that there are elements of a Roman Catholic origin in this picture which we ourselves have incorporated, though unwittingly. There are also habits introduced during the time of the Protestant Reformation and the patterns brought into our continent by the missionaries who presented the Gospel to us and established the first churches. However, it cannot be denied that in all of these influences one can perceive Biblical principles being reflected, which can have a good application at the present. But we should not ignore that all of them represent a certain degree of a cultural heritage, be they of fairly recent origin or from time immemorial. What is important for us is that, once we become aware of their existence and origin, we should be able to establish the difference between that which we have traditionally accepted and institutionalized—and even almost ‘canonized’—and that which is Biblically valid and functional in our context. There is also a demand for us to examine the situation fearlessly as well as the factors which are still contributing to produce it. We should then try to lead it along strictly Biblical lines which our Lord himself sets up at the present time. In all honesty we should test everything and hold fast that which is good. At the same time we should not hesitate to incorporate that which is an integral part of our Latin culture that can be honouring to the Lord.

## II. Present-Day Conditions in Theology and Society

Even though in general terms pastoral studies have had a somewhat secondary place as has already been noted, and perhaps preaching has been over-emphasized with respect to the healing and leading of souls, we can see that some works concerning pastoral work have been produced in Spanish. The following list speaks eloquently:

*Laborando con Exito en el Ministerio* (Working Successfully in the Ministry) by A.T. Robertson.

*El Pastor* (The Pastor) by H. Harvey.

*¿Llamado a predicar?* (Called to Preach?) by W. W. Melton.

*El Obrero Cristiano Normal* (The Normal Christian Worker) by Watchman Nee. [p. 114](#)

*Pastores del Rebaño* (Shepherds of the Flock) by G. B. Williamson.

*Una Clinica Espiritual* (A Spiritual Clinic) by J. O. Sanders.

*De Corazón a Corazón* (Heart to Heart Talks) by Samuel Vila.

*La Práctica de la Pastoría* (The Work of the Pastorate) by Donaldo D. Turner.

To mention just a few. They all represent a commendable effort on the part of the translators and publishing houses and we should all be sincerely grateful for them. Moreover, the very existence of such a list, even if it is short, shows a genuine concern in some evangelical circles on behalf of such an important task in our midst.

Unfortunately, as can be observed simply by looking at the list, none of the authors are Latin Americans, except for Samuel Vila. It is thus obvious that the original purpose has been to apply them to an Anglo-Saxon situation, with Anglo-Saxon illustrations. This in itself is not a capital sin, but it does mean that they are rather far from our particular context. As for the correspondence course entitled *La Práctica de la Pastoría* which was written in a Latin American context, its patterns of thought and observations are, in the

best of cases, the product of naturalization after they have been imported to South America—to say nothing of the term *pastoría*.\*. But what is more important for our present purpose is that these books are lacking a truly Biblico-theological basis. Generally speaking, they limit themselves to sharing a few experiences which simply turn out to be a series of practical suggestions about what should or should not be done in specific situations. In some of them can be found detailed instructions about the administrative aspect of pastoral work whereas in others we find inspiration through devotional meditations.

Moreover, the evangelical literature market is beginning to provide for us works of a psychological nature, written and edited by evangelicals. Among these are *Biblia y Medicina Psicológica* (The Bible and Psychological Medicine), and *Psicoanálisis, Reflexiología y Conversión Cristiana* (Psycho-analysis, Reflexiology and Christian Conversion), which delve into scientific depths of great importance. These give us hope that the evangelical pastor will, in the very near p. 115 future, be adequately prepared to speak intelligently in a time that uses psychological terminology quite widely. Unfortunately we must notice once more that the majority of the authors are Anglo-Saxons. Also, that the language used is well above the understanding of our fellow ministers. Moreover, if many servants of the Lord lack a firm theological basis for their pastoral ministry, the introduction of this type of literature will only contribute to their own confusion.

All of this leads us to deplore the lack of production of adequate works from the pen of Latin American thinkers and theologians. We know from many sources that in such and such an institution of theological training such and such a professor is giving excellent lectures in pastoral theology; that he gives his students excellent syllabi and that, if he makes use of any existing work as a textbook, he often corrects it as he goes along and applies it wisely to concrete situations in his immediate area. It is to be deplored that the circulation of those documents is extremely limited, which consequently means that the benefit derived from them is for only a few people. Moreover, all these isolated efforts represent a duplication of the same type of work that is being done by others in other countries. It is very possible that the lack of adequate incentives may contribute also to these professors' apparent reluctance to publish and circulate their teachings and experiences. Again, there may be some who consider that their work is not worthy of being made known to the rest of the continent. But neither these nor any other reasons should keep our pastors, theologians and professors from entering the field of producing this kind of material from our own point of view and our own context. If some seminaries have relegated the serious study of pastoral theology to a secondary place,<sup>2</sup> present-day demands make it imperative to take emergency measures so that this situation experiences a radical change. If some people p. 116 feel inhibited or hesitant in entering

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\* This term is really a dictionary word which describes quite accurately the work of the pastor, but which is hardly used in Latin America. It seems to me that a more common word could have been used just as effectively, thus eliminating the impression of a mere translation

<sup>2</sup> This assertion is confirmed by the suggestion concerning theological education which is found in the book *The Christian Ministry in Latin America and the Caribbean*, which says:

Finally, the seminaries and Bible schools should develop in the student a pastoral spirit and train him for pastoral ministry and pastoral counselling. Often the student will have had no experience of this kind of thing, no personal background for understanding its significance. The Roman Church does not offer such a ministry to many of its people and the present generation of Protestant pastors is only moderately effective at this point. Neurotic and psychotic problems are not uncommon in the churches and are to be found within the schools themselves (p. 206).

the arena of literary production, let them be encouraged through collective efforts such as those initiated by our Fraternity to give impetus to these ideas so that we may confront the crude realities of our continent.

And a quick look at the situation will confirm our assertion. Our continent has traditionally been considered as being populated by peasants with meagre earnings, few demands, and small ambitions, and that only a few military men and vociferous politicians stage small *coup d'états* and political comedies frequently. What has been known in recent years by the term 'developing countries', represents among us slow steps toward industrialization under basically conservative systems.

But we all know the truth to be completely different. Even if ours were a truly agrarian society, the peasant has experienced a transformation which is nothing short of dramatic concerning his points of view and even in his habits, simply because he can now purchase a transistor radio. Besides that, he has migrated in large numbers to such centres of population as Lima, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo and Montevideo.<sup>3</sup> These in turn have had to assimilate him alongside their native populations with all the subsequent proliferation of problems. In several areas with modern buildings and improvised shacks men and women concentrate with a multiplicity of tensions, frustrations and needs that condition, and in many cases, determine their conduct and attitude. Every novelty and apparent improvement in those great urban centres imposes a heavy burden both on the heads of family and housewives that affects their lives and those of their children.

As a result it is the home that suffers most of the effects of its environment. One of our strong traditions includes firm family ties and relative stability where the father is in unquestionable command, the mother is submissive and understanding, and the children are obedient. Truly, the father's escapades have always been tolerated, but the mother has always risen to develop a benevolent and unifying matriarchy that helps keep the home together. But it is precisely within this framework of deeply rooted customs and precarious equilibrium where the seeds of destruction of the home have started to sprout and yield fatal fruit. To these may be added the current trends imposed by what is learned through movies [p. 117](#) and television programmes, as well as newspaper reports and other information media. These, together with a spiritual vacuum created by an archaic and decaying religious system with its relative morality, have caused the very foundations of the family structure to be in grave danger. And we cannot deny that these conditions, besides the promiscuous situation engendered by reduced living space and the moral cynicism found in exclusive residential areas, have been a basis for the spirit of licentiousness which indiscriminately incorporates exotic influences and foreign fads to the mainstream of life. It is here where the effective ministry of the pastor is needed. This must be a man who can manifest his absolute dependence on the Great Shepherd of the sheep for the solution of his own domestic problems.

What, then, could be added regarding many other problems of our modern society which in turn are an integral part of the life of many of the members of our churches? Due to prejudices or shyness many pastors intentionally by-pass the very hot issues of birth control both in public and in private. Many more think that such problems as drugs and alkaloids 'are of the devil' and that 'their' young people are immune to them because 'they are Christians' and 'have a good example in their parents and teachers'. There are those also who condemn short skirts among women and long hair among men with a holy anger without understanding that these are but symptoms of a generation which is sick of hypocrisy and saturated with false repressions. Of course we can also find those who

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<sup>3</sup> Glen H. Beyer (ed), *The Urban Explosion in Latin America* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 92.

watch in utter bewilderment revolutionary movements on behalf of social and political equality and can but declare piously that their own mission is simply spiritual. In some instances it is thought that the only adequate solution to these problems is for the Church to intensify its evangelistic activities and hold more services and special activities which may keep its members busy and help them to take their minds off their burdens.

But at the same time there is the possibility of finding plausible solutions both for these problems and for the many emotional disturbances which are so much in vogue nowadays. Psychology and some other ideological trends have produced valid analyses that, generally speaking, have been the product of careful experimentation—except, of course, those solutions offered by the increasingly popular astrology and its speculative fantasies. We have observed, nevertheless, that some of the pastors in urban and suburban p. 118 areas feel a special attraction for clinical psychology and they fall into the temptation of becoming amateur psychiatrists. With amazing boldness they venture to analyse their parishioners who go to them asking for some help. They even dare to recommend some kind of treatment which seems feasible simply because they have become familiar with one or two types of therapy or clinical procedures related to this scientific discipline. And even though their motives may be good and noble, their medical ability is non-existent since they have not undergone the strict regimentation and training of the profession. Moreover, they may fall into the trap of limiting themselves to the use of these psychological tools in a rudimentary way, or of believing that these are sufficient in themselves for the solution of the problems brought before them. They may think that by adding the reading of a Bible portion and a short prayer a spiritual sanction will be given to their actions and will bring a special blessing to the counsellee. As a result they may have offered another panacea which may deceive the person who receives it, but they will have failed to fulfil their mission as servants of the Lord and shepherds of the flock.

In conclusion, present-day pastoral work in Latin America shows us a rather strange combination of traditional and institutionalized patterns together with a lot that is new and even imported. This has not seriously considered many of the problems that haunt church members and people in general. If we put everything on the scales we have to confess that it is found wanting and even in danger of losing its seasoning power and its positive influence even among the evangelical churches themselves. In the best of cases it will become just one more option before the believer with but few probabilities of receiving adequate attention. A conscientious and in-depth study is called for, one that may answer fully to present-day needs and to the Biblical imperative without letting itself be led by intellectual novelties or by political influences of a pseudo-Christian nature.

### **III. The Biblical Imperative.**

What really is a pastor? The Word of God describes for us his characteristics, functions and duties by means of different key terms. p. 119

To begin with, the noun 'pastor' and its corresponding verb 'to shepherd', occupy a place of special importance since from its real and symbolic use are derived a whole series of meanings which are essential to the integration of a complete picture of the divine ideal. We cannot forget that the pastor is that individual who is in charge of a flock and assists it in its different needs. But the Biblical term goes further than a merely bucolic situation. It describes for us the person who leads, feeds, keeps, defends and guides the flock in its daily activities. Thus when we speak symbolically of a leader and his relation to his people, all the preceding characteristics are borne in mind and at the same time the concept of a captain who marches at the head of his army is added. Moses asked for his people 'a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall



lead them out and bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep which have no shepherd.’<sup>4</sup>

A similar note is struck when we are told about the relation of God himself with his people. Jacob talks about him saying that he is the God who leads him<sup>5</sup> and also ‘the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel’.<sup>6</sup> These ideas are used and enlarged by David later on in such passages as the one which says: ‘O save thy people, and bless thy heritage; be thou their shepherd, and carry them for ever.’<sup>7</sup> This intimate relationship and special responsibility is also conferred, in a representative way, on judges, kings, priests and prophets so that they might be the leaders of the people and might guide them according to God’s will. This is the reason for the Lord’s severe dealings with them when they failed to fulfil their duties. He showed them their errors and weaknesses and promised his people a Shepherd who would truly be after God’s own heart.<sup>8</sup>

When the Lord Jesus Christ came to the world this Shepherd also said that those who had come before him were ‘thieves and robbers’<sup>9</sup> but that he was the Good Shepherd.<sup>10</sup> The apostles tell us that he is also the Great Shepherd of the sheep,<sup>11</sup> the Shepherd p. 120 and Guardian of our souls<sup>12</sup> and the Chief Shepherd.<sup>13</sup> It thus fulfils the ideal set by [Psalm 23](#) in all its implications, but at the same time it opens new dimensions that will be turned into benefits for the sheep. In connection with this, in his lesson found in [John 10](#) which speaks to us about what he does on behalf of his sheep, he not only defends them but provides eternal life, an atoning sacrifice and absolute security before the Father, as well as many other details which only an extensive and detailed study of the passage may reveal. And if this is not enough he reveals his wish, a completely new one for his Jewish audience, to go after other sheep. Even though these may not belong to the same flock, they are his also. He considers it his duty to bring them so that there may be one fold and one shepherd. His relationship with other nations will also be as a severe judge. It has been announced that he will rule them with a rod of iron in order to fulfil the Old Testament prophecies.<sup>14</sup>

When we find that in the New Testament the Lord also entrusts the pastorate to his own, he does not limit it to those strictly pastoral duties that have already been mentioned. He also makes use of some of the functions of the old Jewish system and completes them with some others which were being used by the Graeco-Roman world of

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<sup>4</sup> [Numbers 27:16, 17](#).

<sup>5</sup> [Genesis 48:15](#).

<sup>6</sup> [Genesis 49:24](#).

<sup>7</sup> [Psalm 28:9](#).

<sup>8</sup> See [Jeremiah 23](#) and [Ezekiel 34](#) as examples of this.

<sup>9</sup> [John 10:8](#).

<sup>10</sup> [John 10:11, 14](#).

<sup>11</sup> [Hebrews 13:20](#).

<sup>12</sup> [I Peter 2:25](#).

<sup>13</sup> [I Peter 5:4](#).

<sup>14</sup> See [Psalm 2:9](#); [Isaiah 11:4](#); [II Thessalonians 2:8](#); [Revelation 2:27](#) and [19:15](#) where the ‘rod of iron’ is the ‘sword of his mouth’. Here the verb translated ‘rule’ is the same as that translated ‘shepherd’ and ‘tend’ or ‘feed’ (*ra’hah* in Hebrew and *poimaino* in Greek).

his time. He gives all of them a Christian meaning so that his Church might function effectively. The elders of old now not only judge but they also govern, preach, and teach.<sup>15</sup> They are true watchmen (bishops) who watch over those whom the Lord bought with his own blood.<sup>16</sup> They are priests, but at the same time they proclaim the truth of God as authentic prophets and witnesses to a new covenant. They have remained in place of the Lord to continue the work he started and to be his special envoys (apostles) to flood the world with his redemptive message. They should be examples of faith for those who are under their care,<sup>17</sup> and they are also a race chosen to declare the wonderful deeds of him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.<sup>18</sup> p. 121

But we have in the Word of God several passages which are much more extensive than those already mentioned. In them we find basic principles for pastoral work that up until now have not been studied properly in our continent. Even though [Psalm 23](#) is one of the favourites, its wealth of vital material for the pastor has not been fully mined yet. Just the same, prophetic passages which contain severe exhortations to the shepherds of the people of Israel, like [Jeremiah 23](#), [Jeremiah 25:34-38](#) and [Ezekiel 34](#), must be studied carefully together with [Zechariah 11](#). At the same time, [John 10](#) deserves a thorough treatment to discover its many angles in connection with pastoral work, as it was conceived in a situation very similar to ours. We should not ignore the Pauline exhortations found in [Acts 20:28-31](#), as well as in [I Timothy 3](#) and [Titus 2](#), which were not written exclusively for lay officers of the church. It is imperative that all of these, as well as some other apparently isolated verses, should be made the object of a complete hermeneutical analysis that might serve as the basis for the formulation of pastoral theology in Latin America.

This will undoubtedly imply that the other areas of theological study should play an equally important part due to the close relationship that each has for the other. While it is true that one of the prime objectives of pastoral work is closely related to the doctrine of sanctification, it is no less important to consider the doctrines of sin, justification, and redemption. These in turn shed light on and receive benefit from Biblical anthropology with all its vast implications for the Latin American man at the present time. Some others within theology proper, Christology, and pneumatology are both inseparable from each other and theological postulates that affect directly the daily life of the believer. These should all be taken into consideration in the formulation mentioned above.

That is to say, that if up to now the practical and technical aspects of pastoral work have been emphasized, these must be balanced by a solid theoretical basis brought about by Biblical revelation, transmitted under the historico-cultural circumstances of the Near East, and planted firmly on Latin American ground and idiosyncrasies. We will no doubt see that the pastor is not just a revered personality with an easy solution for all the problems and needs nor that his intervention is limited to spiritual matters only. We will see a man of God who ministers to the sheep and who acts as an effective link between the Eternal One and his demands, and the p. 122 temporal and its impulses. He will also help his people to set up priorities on a scale of values which is according to the divine order.

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<sup>15</sup> [I Timothy 5:17](#).

<sup>16</sup> [Acts 20:28](#); [Hebrews 13:17](#).

<sup>17</sup> [Hebrews 13:7](#).

<sup>18</sup> [I Peter 2:9](#).

But, we may ask, who is capable of doing all these things? Ecclesiastical structures at the present time limit the pastoral ministry to a rather exclusive group of men who have been ordained or to those who enjoy a certain degree of official recognition. And even though many agree that these men are not fully trained or enabled to carry on an adequate ministry to congregations that are growing in the midst of situations such as we have briefly seen on previous pages, there is a strong trend which favours a sort of a priestly caste which is even more exclusive and firmly established. Laymen are accorded an important place but the concept of the universal priesthood of the believer is by-passed. Men who eventually may be ordained are preferred over those who would rather remain as simple church members. We would be dreaming if we believed that the majority of our ecclesiastical bodies or local church governing boards have the idea of the universal priesthood of the believer as a goal or as a natural activity for every one of their members. This should also be one of the immediate matters for specific study and an inescapable responsibility. True, there is a need for outstanding leaders, but this does not mean that salaried experts are to take the place and obligation of every child of God. If there is the need for adequate training of an increasing number of men who are not thinking of devoting all their time to ministerial work, this is the time to take hold of the opportunity afforded by the new system of theological education by extension. And perhaps not even then will all the resources which can be used to promote a better qualified pastoral ministry be enough to take care of all the believers and their children as well as the newcomers. It is my personal fear that if we go on ignoring this vital aspect in the life of the Church, in a few years we will have inoculated a good many Latin Americans against the Gospel.<sup>19</sup>

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## Abstract Article

*The Kingdom of God, Eschatology, and Social and Political Ethics in Latin America*, by  
SAMUEL ESCOBAR (Theological Fraternity Bulletin, 1975, No. 1).

*This is an article with a different slant on the subject. Escobar brings home again and again this point: "Will the people of God decide to adopt the difficult practice of truth in the same way they applaud the beauty and logic of the theory?"*

*Do one's eschatological ideas and theories determine a dynamic way of looking at oneself? Yes, says Escobar. He proves his point by discussing the whole concept of the Kingdom of God in Latin America and challenges the evangelical presence and its significance in socio-*

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<sup>19</sup> I am indebted to the Mexican sociologist César Moreno for the idea of inoculation. In a private conversation he has indicated to me that it consists of giving the unbeliever a small dose of the message of the Gospel mixed with an acquaintance of the environment of the churches and their activities, without bothering to help him grow in Biblical knowledge.

*political life. What does he mean when he talks about ethical, critical and apologetic dimensions and the dimension of hope in the context of these in the Kingdom of God in our lives? In presenting possible answers, this article very strongly convicts the one who is committed to the Kingdom of God and seeks to make the theory and practice of one's faith coincide and equally important for one's own lifestyle. p. 125*

# **Gospel and Spirit: A Joint Statement**

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## **THE BACKGROUND**

A GROUP nominated by the Church of England Evangelical Council and the Fountain Trust respectively met together for four valuable day conferences over a period of 18 months. We are glad that we did so, and acknowledge that our failure to do so earlier may have helped to prolong unnecessary misunderstandings and polarizations.

We do not all see eye-to-eye on every point, but we thankfully recognize that what unites us is far greater than the matters on which some of us still disagree. We share the same evangelical faith, recognizing each other as brothers in Christ and in the Gospel, and we desire to remain in fellowship and to build yet stronger relationships of love and trust.

Our task has been to try to articulate widely held and representative attitudes among the so-called 'charismatic' and 'non-charismatic' leaders of Anglican Evangelicalism and to bring both to the bar of Holy Scripture. We have sought to understand each other's views better, and to achieve closer harmony and correspondence through examining them all in the light of Biblical teaching.

We are now issuing this account of our progress, indicating both agreements and disagreements, in the hope that it may help to promote unity where there is discord, and mutual understanding where there has been mistrust.

We have been struck by the fact that in our discussions, differences of view (usually denoted by 'some' and 'others' (of us) in the text) have by no means always coincided with our 'charismatic' and 'non-charismatic' indentifications. p. 126

### **1. The Charismatic Movement and Anglican Evangelicalism**

(1) The Charismatic Movement in the United Kingdom has Evangelical roots, but is now both trans-denominational and transtraditional, and embraces a very wide spectrum of views, attitudes and practices, not all originating from a recognized Evangelical 'stable'. Anglican Evangelicalism also embraces a wide spectrum of views and emphases, as one would expect of a movement that has been developing and adapting itself over four centuries. In our exchanges we have tried to bear in mind the complexity of both constituencies and to avoid facile over-simplifications. Readers of this statement will judge how far we have succeeded.

(2) We are united in thanking God for the real and obvious deeper acquaintance with Jesus Christ and his saving grace which charismatic renewal has brought to many

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individuals, and the new life and vigour which many churches have come to enjoy as a result. We acknowledge however that with this there have been dangers, and sometimes disasters, which have called for some self-criticism. We rejoice too that renewal of spiritual life is manifestly not confined to 'charismatic' circles and churches, while we share a common sadness that much of the Church, both Evangelical and non-Evangelical, seems as yet to be untouched by true renewal in any form. In the quest for a quickening of the whole Church we believe ourselves substantially to be making common cause.

(3) During the past 30 years, sections of Anglican Evangelicalism have experienced a notable renewal of concern for the study and teaching of the doctrines of the faith. The main concern of the Charismatic renewal, at least until recently, has been experiential rather than theological. The resulting sense of polarization and of being threatened at the level of one's priorities, purposes and programmes may not have been justified, but has certainly been a potent cause of both tension and coolness. In our conversations we sought to overcome these inhibitions and build bridgeheads for future fellowship, trust and co-operation, and this we believe we have been enabled to do. p. 127

## **2. Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Spirit: Relating Terms and Experience**

### *(a) All Gospel Blessings Given in Christ*

We all agree that every spiritual blessing is given to us by God in and through our Lord Jesus Christ ([Ephesians 1:3](#)), so that every Christian is, in principle, complete, receiving fullness of life in him ([Colossians 2:9-10](#)). The Christ whom together we worship is the Jesus of the New Testament, God's Son incarnate who died for our sins, rose again and now lives and reigns. The gift of the Holy Spirit to believers is part of the ministry to them of our crucified, risen and ascended Lord, and the ministry of the Spirit is always to communicate, exalt, and bear witness to this glorified Christ. We thus agree in our understanding of how the ministry of the Spirit is related to the Father and the Son, and in rejecting the idea that in the Spirit we receive something more wonderful than our Saviour, or something apart from him and the fullness of his saving grace.

### *(b) Initiation into Christ*

We are all convinced that, according to the New Testament, Christian initiation, symbolized and sealed by water-baptism, is a unitary work of God with many facets. This work is expressed by a cluster of partly overlapping concepts, including forgiveness, justification, adoption, regeneration, conversion (embracing repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour), new creation, death, burial and resurrection in and with Christ, and the giving and reception of the Holy Spirit. These concepts may be logically separated for consideration in teaching and learning; God's initiatory work is itself apprehended and experienced by different individuals in differing ways and time-scales; and certain aspects of it are in fact sometimes absent in evangelism, teaching, awareness and conscious experience. But essentially the concepts all belong together, since together they express the single full reality of the believer's incorporation into Christ, which leads to assurance of sonship, and power to live and serve in Christ.

We are agreed on the need (i) to avoid trying to stereotype or straitjacket either the work of the Holy Spirit or the experience of individual Christians into a one, two or three-stage experience; (ii) to avoid presenting the work of the Spirit in separation from the p. 128 work of the Son, since the Son gives the Spirit and the Spirit both witnesses to the Son and forms him in us; and (iii) to present the full range of Christ's salvation and gift for us in all our evangelism and teaching—i.e. to preach a complete, rather than a truncated, Gospel.



*(c) Terminology: 'Baptism in the Spirit'*

We are agreed that every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit ([Romans 8:9](#)). It is impossible for anyone to acknowledge sin, confess Christ, experience new birth, enjoy the Saviour's fellowship, be assured of sonship, grow in holiness, or fulfil any true service or ministry without the Spirit. The Christian life is life in the Spirit. We all thank God for this gift.

In recent years there has been, as we said, a fresh enrichment in many Christians' Spirit-given experience of Christ, and in many cases they have called it 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit'. Some of these people have seen their experience as similar to that of the disciples on the day of Pentecost, and other comparable events in Acts. Despite the observable parallels, however, there are problems attaching to the use of this term to describe an experience separated, often by a long period of time, from the person's initial conversion to Christ.

In the first place, this usage suggests that what is sub-normal in the New Testament should be regarded as normal today: namely, that a long interval should elapse between new birth and any conscious realization or reception of the Spirit's power.

In the second place, the New Testament use of the words 'baptize' and especially 'baptize into' stresses their initiatory content and context, and therefore refers to Christian initiation, rather than to a later enrichment of Christian experience.

However, we see that it may be hard to change a usage which has become very widespread, although we all agree in recognizing its dangers. We would all emphasise that it must not be employed in a way which would question the reality of the work of the Spirit in regeneration and the real difference that this brings in experience from the outset. On that we are unanimous. Some who speak of a post-conversion 'baptism in the Spirit' think of it mainly in terms of an empowering for service similar to the disciples' experience at Pentecost, though all are agreed that we should not isolate this side of the Spirit's work from his other ministries to and in the believer. p. 129

Some, stressing the experiential content of the term 'baptism in the Spirit', value it as having played a unique part in awakening Christians out of spiritual lethargy and bondage, and regard it as still having such a role in the future. Others, concentrating rather upon its initiatory implications, prefer to use it only to describe one aspect of new birth.

None of us wishes to deny the possibility or reality of subsequent experiences of the grace of God which have deep and transforming significance. We all affirm that a constant hunger and thirst after God should characterize every Christian, rather than any complacent claim to have 'arrived'. We urge one another and all our fellow Christians to press on to know the Lord better, and thus to enter into the fullness of our inheritance in Christ ([Philippians 3:8-16](#)).

*(d) Initial Evidence of Having Received the Gift of the Spirit*

Although speaking in tongues is an initial phenomenon recorded on a number of occasions in connection with receiving the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts, the New Testament will not allow us to make it either the only, or the universal, or an indubitable evidence that this gift has been given. Indeed, we believe it is dangerous to appear to identify the Giver with the presence of any one of his gifts in isolation, however valuable that gift might be in itself. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the reception of the Spirit by Christians in the New Testament was something experienced, evidenced and often immediately perceived, rather than merely inferred (cf. [Acts 19:2](#); [Galatians 3:2](#)). When we ask what evidence of this reception we might expect, in the light of the New Testament records, the immediate answer must be a new awareness of the love, forgiveness and

presence of God as our Father through Jesus Christ who is confessed as Lord, and the joyful spontaneous praise of God (whether in one's own tongue or another), issuing subsequently in a life of righteousness and obedience, and of loving service to God and man, a life which manifests gifts of the Spirit as well as spiritual understanding.

### **3. Spiritual Ethos**

#### *(a) Emotion and Intellect: Doctrine and Experience*

We are aware that there is a real danger of exalting the intellect and understanding at the expense of the emotions. We know too that *p. 130* there is an equal danger of reacting against this into an anti-intellectual and emotionalist form of piety. We wish to assert, against both these extremes, the importance in faith and worship of the whole person. We believe the mind must be involved in understanding the faith and applying it, and that the emotions, as well as the will, must be involved in our response to the truth and love of God, in his worship as well as in the compassionate service of our fellow men. Both doctrine and experience, Word and Spirit, must go together, Biblical doctrine testing, interpreting and controlling our experience, and experience fulfilling, incarnating and expressing our beliefs. Only so can we avoid the two extremes of a dead, rigid and barren orthodoxy, or an uncontrolled, unstable and fanatical emotionalism.

#### *(b) Worship*

We believe that what are seen as characteristic features of 'Evangelical' and 'Charismatic' worship and spirituality will complement and enrich one another and correct the imbalances in each, although we recognize that in some situations the two so overlap already as to be almost indistinguishable. Many 'Charismatic' gatherings would benefit from order, teaching, and some robustly doctrinal 'Evangelical' hymns; just as many 'Evangelical' services and prayer meetings would benefit from more spontaneity, greater participation, a more relaxed atmosphere, the gentle, loving wonder and praise of some renewal songs, and learning to listen to God in times of prayer and meditation.

#### *(c) Faith: Passive and Active*

A different emphasis appears on occasion regarding the exercise of faith in the promises of the blessings offered to us by Christ in the Gospel. 'Evangelicals' have sometimes laid all stresses on the acceptance of Christ and his forgiveness and salvation at the outset, leading to commitment, and expected God then and thereafter to pour out his blessings in Christ without any necessary appropriating prayers of faith on our part—because it is his way to do more than we ask or think, and to give us many things without our asking. 'Charismatic' Christians, however, are among those who stress the need for the exercise of expectant and appropriating faith in prayer for blessings and gifts which God has promised to bestow upon us. Both emphases can find support in the New Testament, *p. 131* and are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Faith must both passively rest in the confidence of our Father's general goodness and generosity, trusting his wisdom to supply what we need as he sees fit, but also on occasion pray actively and expectantly on the basis of his specific promises to his children and Church, to claim their fulfilment as covenanted by him in answer to our prayers. We all recognize further that sometimes our Father in his wisdom does not answer his children's prayers immediately, in order to teach us patiently and trustingly to wait upon him for his gifts. This saves us from lapsing from a living relationship into any automatic view of prayer, and helps us to trust him to give what we need and ask for in the way and at the time which he knows to be best for us.

#### **4. Church Life, Structures and Relationships**

##### *(a) The Body of Christ*

According to the New Testament, the whole Church is a charismatic community in which all are endowed with spiritual gifts (*charisma*) and are responsible for exercising them for the common good. The Charismatic Movement has been one of the forces which in recent years have begun healthily to correct an earlier excessive individualism, through recovery of the Biblical emphasis upon the Body of Christ. We welcome this, with its corollary of every member being able to play a full part, through the Spirit's equipping, in the Church's life, worship, witness and service. We recognize that under God this emphasis has prompted much hard work and patient ministry in the whole field of personal relationships and Christian life in community, and this we all applaud.

##### *(b) Structures*

If these gains are to be assimilated, traditional ways of worship, ministry and congregational life must be modified and adapted. The doctrine and reality of the body of Christ cannot adequately be expressed through a pattern of ministry dependent chiefly, if not entirely, on one man, nor through exclusive use of a totally rigid 'set' pattern of worship. Our Anglican heritage at both these points can and should be made flexible, so as to combine with, and contribute to, a genuinely corporate and Spirit-led Church life. We see this as a necessary implication of the spiritual renewal of the Church, and suspect that few yet realize either how important [p. 132](#) it is or how far it needs to go. Meanwhile, we welcome the preliminary experiments whereby both 'charismatic' and 'non-charismatic' Christians are currently seeking to discover for themselves what this principle might mean in practice.

##### *(c) Leadership and Appointments*

We believe that a clergyman must see himself as an enabler and trainer of others to be the body of Christ in the place where they are. When the members of a church are renewed and revived so that they begin to exercise their gifts and to discover and develop their ministries, and lay leadership begins to grow, the pastor's work of oversight, teaching and leadership, and his function as a resource person, though changing perhaps in outward form, become more, not less, vital.

Accordingly, we believe that when the living becomes vacant in a charismatically-experienced church, great care must be taken that the functioning body of Christ in that place has a significant voice in the making of the next appointment. It also becomes important that a man be appointed who will gladly and skilfully lead a team, rather than expect to exercise a one-man pattern of ministry. This is just to say that the church, in making such an appointment, must keep up with what the Holy Spirit has been doing in that place, and not risk quenching him by ignoring, under-valuing or seeking to counter his work.

##### *(d) Keeping Churches and Congregations Together*

We have no new magical formula to hold churches together; there is only the old one of shared truth and mutual love, humility, tolerance and respect. Where churches split over these or any other matters, there are usually faults on both sides. Important guidelines will include: avoidance of any idea of first and second class Christians, which would engender pride, resentment and stubborn self-justification; willingness by those on all

sides to respect each other's convictions, with openness to correction in the light of an honest reading of the New Testament; avoidance of quenching genuine spiritual gifts; respect for the authority of official leaders in the local church; and avoidance of splinter groups developing whose focus is something other (and therefore less) than Jesus Christ himself. We also believe it to be important that those who disagree on these or other matters should be brought together in direct encounter face-to-face, [p. 133](#) rather than talking about each other without meeting to discuss their differences.

#### *(e) Roman Catholics and Renewal*

The renewing work of the Holy Spirit has led Christians of different backgrounds having fellowship together in Christ and in the Spirit, as old prejudices and dividing barriers melt under the new power of God's love in their lives. Protestants and Roman Catholics often associate with each other in this way. We welcome this, but at the same time recognize these dangers:

- (i) A unity based on experience at the expense of doctrine would be less than the unity envisaged in the New Testament, and would be dangerous in the long term.
- (ii) Personal (and even corporate) renewal has not always meant the dropping of all anti-Biblical or sub-Biblical traditions and practices. We see need to pray for and to encourage reformation by God's Word as well as by renewal by his Spirit in all churches. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church, however, a massive international community which has only recently begun to question its own historic stances, we recognize that God calls us to be realistic in our expectations and to allow time (how long is not for us to say) for the forces of reformation and renewal to operate widely enough for changes in official formulations and interpretations of doctrine to become possible, where they are necessary.

### **5. Spiritual Gifts**

#### *(a) Their Nature, Range and Variety*

A spiritual gift is a God-given capacity to serve others by his grace in a manner that edifies them in some way by the showing forth of Christ and his love. Spiritual gifts are listed in [Romans 12](#), [I Corinthians 12](#), [Ephesians 4](#) and [I Peter 4](#). We see no Biblical warrant for isolating one set of gifts listed elsewhere in the New Testament, nor for treating these lists as exhaustive. Neither the context and terminology of [I Corinthians 12](#) nor a comparison of the lists themselves will allow us to elevate one gift or set of gifts above another, although Paul indicates that in a meeting prophecy edifies [p. 134](#) the church, whereas tongues without interpretation do not. The comparative value of gifts depends upon the degree to which they edify, in the context in which they operate. Whilst observing that not all gifts and ministries have been equally in evidence throughout the Church's history, we declare our openness to receiving any spiritual gifts that are consonant with the New Testament, and see no reason why such gifts should not be given and exercised today. A few which have sometimes caused particular difficulties are singled out for special treatment later.

#### *(b) Praying for Gifts*

The Holy Spirit is sovereign in the distribution of gifts to particular individuals. The New Testament encourages the congregation to desire and to pray for spiritual gifts, and to exercise those received for the good of others. A congregation may rightly pray

expectantly for the Lord to supply a need, and where they see a gift or ministry required to meet that need, it is clearly appropriate to ask him for it.

*(c) Gifts for Every Member*

The New Testament teaches that every Christian has already received some gift or gifts, and lays upon all the responsibility to recognize what is already given, and to manifest it. It also encourages all to desire, and therefore be open to receive and exercise, a spiritual gift and ministry of one sort or another, and sees the healthy functioning of a congregation as the body of Christ as dependent upon each one contributing in this way. We believe this to be one of the most important truths highlighted by the Charismatic Movement, with far-reaching implications for the life and ministry of all our churches.

*(d) Their Use, Regulation and Oversight*

We believe it is vital that those who claim to have gifts should have those gifts tested by the leadership in the body of Christ in that place, and not be given *carte blanche* to exercise them as if above being questioned or corrected. Christians with recognized gifts should not be stifled, but rather encouraged in their ministry by the leadership. The exercise of gifts must be overseen by the eldership of the churches and by those more experienced in that field. Such gifts should be kept within the fellowship of the church, and not become a focal point for a new 'gift-centred' fellowship. *p. 135*

## **6. On Particular Gifts and Ministries**

*(a) Apostleship*

Who, if any, of the first Christians shared the authority belonging to the Eleven and Paul, and on what grounds, may be debatable, but there is little doubt as to what that authority was. Through divine revelation and inspiration these men were authoritative spokesmen, or witnesses to, and interpreters of, God and his Son. Their personal authority as teachers and guides—authority bestowed and guaranteed by the risen Christ—was final, and no appeal away from what they said was allowable. Such authority now belongs only to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, under which all our churches and church leaders stand. Though latter-day ministries may in certain respects parallel apostolic functions, yet in their primary role as authoritative instructors the apostles have no successors, and any utterances or gestures of leadership today for which immediate inspiration is claimed must be evaluated by appeal to apostolic standards set forth in Holy Scripture. This is the Church's one sure safeguard against being spiritually tyrannized and misled, as has repeatedly happened in Church history.

*(b) Prophecy*

Whilst estimates and interpretations of the New Testament phenomenon of prophecy vary, it is not identified there with the gift and ministry of teaching. Immediacy in receiving and declaring God's present message to men is the hallmark of New Testament prophecy, as of its Old Testament counterpart. Preaching may at times approximate more to prophecy, although its basic character is one of teaching and exhortation. If the possibility of prophecy in the sense of speaking a word from the Lord under the direct prompting of the Holy Spirit is admissible today, what is said will be tested by its general agreement with Scripture, and will not be accepted as adding materially to the Bible's basic revelation of God and his saving purposes in Christ. It will not be required that such utterances be cast in the first person singular, nor will those that are so cast be thought to have greater authority on that account.



### *(c) Miracles*

The living God is revealed to us in Scripture as the Creator and Sustainer of all things, whose normal mode of operation is through *p. 136* the processes of nature and history, which he controls. We think there is need to unfold this truth more thoroughly at the present time, teaching Christians to discern the hand of God in all things. At the same time we all believe that miracles can occur today.

Despite the virtual impossibility of arriving at a satisfactory definition of 'miracles' in strictly scientific terms, we are in general agreement concerning their nature and purpose. We follow Scripture in conceiving of miracles phenomenally, as occurrences of an unusual kind which bring awareness of the close presence of God, working out his will of salvation or judgement according to his Word, and seeking by these manifestations to stir up the observers and beneficiaries (not to mention others) to new trust and worship. We believe that faith in the living God as delineated in Scripture compels us to be open to the possibility of miracles in every age under the New Covenant, and that the Lord may call some Christians to particular ministries of a more obviously miraculous kind in particular times and places. However, we are never in a position to demand a miracle, since we may never dictate to our sovereign Lord how he shall work in answer to our prayers. Our business is to rest upon and claim his promises in obedience to his Word, but to leave the means of the answer to his wisdom. Over-concentration upon the miraculous can blind people to the manifold and wonderful everyday working of God in the world in 'non-miraculous' ways in the spheres of both creation and history. On the precise degree of expectation of miracles which is appropriate today we are not, however, completely agreed.

### *(d) Healing*

We believe that all true wholeness, health and healing come from God. We do not therefore regard 'divine healing' as being always miraculous. God's normal mode of healing is through the processes he has built into the human body and spirit. We also look forward to the resurrection, knowing that only then shall we be finally and fully freed from sickness, weakness, pain and mortality. At the same time, we welcome the recovery by the Church of a concern for healing, and rejoice at those who have found new psychological or physical health through faith in Christ, and through Christian ministries and gifts of healing. But we also wish to express caution against giving wrong impressions and causing unnecessary distress through (i) making it appear that it is sinful for a Christian to be ill; *p. 137* (ii) laying too great a stress and responsibility upon the faith of the individual who is seeking healing; (iii) emphasizing physical health more than the wholeness of the person; and (iv) setting non-medically-trained ministries and gifts of healing in opposition to the work and ministry of doctors and nurses.

### *(e) Exorcism.*

Part of the ministry of Jesus Christ in the New Testament and in every age around the world is to set people free from the grip of Satanic forces at work in or upon their personality. We are united in our belief in the existence of such personal spiritual powers, and in both the need and the possibility of Christ's deliverance. For he has been exalted far above all principalities and powers, and God has put them all under his feet. We all can testify that the regular ministry of Word and Sacrament, together with the prayer of faith which this evokes, can liberate people from bondage to the power of the devil. Sometimes, however, especially in clear cases of demon possession, exorcism may be necessary. Whilst not doubting that Christ gives to some people especially the necessary gifts to

exercise this ministry safely and effectively in his name, it is an area fraught with dangers, which drive us to utter several cautionary warnings: (i) a preoccupation with demons (often to the neglect of the holy angels) is generally both dangerous and unbalanced, as is the tendency to attribute every unusual condition to demonic influence or presence; (ii) it is wise to avoid speaking of 'spirits' or 'demons' to those to whom we minister personally, unless this is absolutely unavoidable; (iii) the ministry of exorcism should not normally be exercised either by any Christian alone, or by any Christian without proper authority and oversight within the Church; (iv) persons in need of this ministry will frequently need help at the psychological/emotional level of healing as well; (v) consultation with medical opinion (preferably sympathetic to a Christian viewpoint) is always highly desirable; (vi) careful pastoral follow-up is essential.

#### *(f) Speaking in Tongues*

Many Christians today testify to the value of this gift in their experience. Opinions vary as to how much of modern *glossalalia* corresponds with the New Testament phenomenon. Most of us would accept that some tongues-speaking, though not necessarily *p. 138* a heavenly language, is nevertheless divinely given and has spiritual and psychological value. We are also aware that a similar phenomenon can occur under occult/demonic influence, and that some such utterances may be merely psychological in origin and not necessarily edifying or beneficial at all.

Opinions also vary as to the value of this gift to the individual, and (with interpretation) to the church. We consider it necessary to hold to the balance of the New Testament in our general attitude to it, in accordance with [1 Corinthians 14](#), neither exalting it above all other gifts, nor despising it and forbidding its exercise (though always with interpretation if in public). But if we are true to the New Testament we shall seek to test it, as we do the other gifts in their public exercise, by its edifying effects; and we shall regulate its use Scripturally, encouraging believers with this gift to 'pray with the understanding also' both in public and in private.

## CONCLUSION

### The Goal of Renewal

The goal of renewal is not merely renewed individuals but a renewed and revived Church, alive with the life of Christ, subject to the Word of Christ, filled with the Spirit of Christ, fulfilling the ministry of Christ, constrained by the love of Christ, preaching the good news of Christ, and thrilled in its worship by the glory of Christ. Such a Church alone can adequately portray Jesus Christ to the world. In preaching, writing and counselling, the Christ-centredness of the Christian life and the work of the Holy Spirit must constantly be emphasized, so that we may all together grow up fully into him, our glorious Head.

#### *Signatories and participants in the discussions:*

John Baker  
Colin Buchanan  
John Collins  
Ian Cundy  
Michael Harper  
Raymond Johnston  
Bruce Kaye  
Gordon Landreth  
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Jim Packer  
Harold Parks  
Gavin Reid  
Tom Smail  
John Stott  
Tom Walker  
Raymond Turvey  
David Watson [p. 139](#)

## Abstract Article

*Paul and Women's Liberation*, by ROBERT BANKS (*Interchange*, No. 18—published by AFES Graduates Fellowship, 405–411, Sussex Street, Sydney 200, Australia).

*In recent years the movement for Women's Liberation has gained such momentum that countless books and articles have been written. Much of the 'liberation literature', particularly in the West, accuses Paul of being the real source of male oppression over women.*

*The author, delving deep into the real meaning of male-female relationships, focuses his attention on the fact that Paul's complete outlook can be understood only if we take Galatians [3:28](#) as our guiding principle. The author tells us in this lengthy article that the Scriptures do not enunciate the principle of male oppression over women. In the order of creation both man and woman are partners in a hierarchical sense as far as functional roles are concerned. Paul is not speaking about equality between man and woman, but about unity in Christ. Hence there is no question of male oppression.*

*The article convincingly shows how in Christ we are all liberated. To have a comprehensive grasp of Paul's outlook on women, the reader is advised to study the full article. [p. 141](#)*

## Some Thoughts on Curriculum Design for Theological Education

*by* PATRICIA J. HARRISON

*This and the following three articles are reprinted from Theological Education Today (November 1976 and February 1977) with permission.*

AN OLD adage has it that ‘it is easier to move a cemetery than to change the curriculum’. At first sight, this appears absurd. Bible Colleges are forever changing the curriculum! But at the deeper level, there may be some truth in the saying. Most of our changes are largely a reshuffling of the present building bricks or an addition or subtraction here and there.

Why change the curriculum anyway? Why indeed, if it is achieving what we want as well as we can reasonably expect? But the many changes, and the comments one hears everywhere suggest that there is widespread dissatisfaction. Both extension and residence educators wonder whether their curricula are sufficiently life-related, whether they are too Western, too theoretical, or otherwise inadequate. They know that neither tradition or innovation should be followed for its own sake.

If your curriculum is completely satisfactory, you may not wish to read much further in this issue. It is addressed to those who are looking for other approaches. We will suggest just a few.

(1) The Biblical pattern of training indicates a basically practical approach. Learning is by seeing and doing as well as by hearing. It is like an apprenticeship, obedience-orientated and with stress on spiritual maturity. I would be the last one to plead for a dilution of basic theological and academic content, but a good curriculum will clearly put practical service in a very central position. (The article by George Patterson in this issue has something to say here.)

(2) The Biblical pattern is also individualized and takes careful account of the different gifts. A good curriculum cannot resemble a cookie mould, which turns out only pastors. Some kind of individualization, some electives, would seem necessary as well as some help for the student to discover and develop his particular gifts. [p. 142](#)

(3) It is important to realize that the ‘pie’ of knowledge can be cut in various ways. The way we traditionally divide into subjects is not the only possible way. An interesting new curriculum (not yet implemented) has been developed by the Christian & Missionary Alliance Bible School in Irian Jaya (Indonesia). They plan to combine theory and practice in some of their main courses. For example, the ‘Life of Christ’ is taught along with ‘Sunday School Methods’. The ‘Doctrine’ course is combined with ‘Topical Preaching’, and a study of Romans with ‘Expository Preaching’.

(4) A curriculum ought to be *functional*. It should be planned to achieve real (not merely visionary) objectives which relate to the actual leadership needs of the Church. One way is to begin with a careful list of the functions a graduate needs to perform and then list the things he will need to *know* in order to *do* those things. A more complete approach is that recommended by Dr. Ted Ward, which involves columns listing what the student should DO and what he should BE, and then listing what he needs to know to fulfil these things. Items in the KNOW column should correlate with something in at least one of the two other columns. We can build a course from the resultant objectives.

(5) A curriculum requires *balance*. Most readers will be aware of Dr. Ward’s Split-Rail Fence analogy. A strong fence requires at least two solid rails—one we will call cognitive input, and the other field experience. It also needs well-spaced solid support posts. We can call these ‘seminars’ by which we mean *any* learning experiences (not just a literal ‘seminar’ or a class meeting) which help to *integrate* knowledge and practice. Many curricula have a very top-heavy cognitive input rail, a rather slim practical experience rail, and are shakiest of all in the support posts.

(6) A good curriculum aims to be as *integrated* as possible. Something deep in human nature craves for unity and relatedness. It is hard to obtain this sufficiently in a curriculum where all subjects are in water-tight compartments, and teachers have only a vague idea of what others are teaching. Research shows that the student is very unlikely to put all the pieces together on his own. The structure of the curriculum must itself consciously

provide as much integration as possible. This also means regular meetings among teachers where they find out what the others are doing. There are many ways of achieving a fair degree of integration. One can use a core curriculum of the kind which is designed around interdisciplinary p.143 problems or make a partial use of this model with subjects which best lend themselves to it. Rarongo Theological College in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea, has experimented with teaching partly by *themes*. Field work also provides an excellent, perhaps the best, integrative force (cf. Patterson's article). One course may meet objectives in a number of content areas. (Kinsler's *Jeremiah*, for example, teaches not only that book, but also much O.T. history, some homiletics, and in particular, an inductive method of study which can be applied to other books. It is an excellent example of an integrated course.) Case studies, comprehensive exams, integration seminars and integrating papers are methods used at various educational levels to achieve some kind of unity in a *smorgasbord* of subjects.

(7) A curriculum should be thoroughly *contextualized* to fit the local culture and situation. This is not possible to the extent desirable if teachers copy too slavishly the courses they have taken somewhere else, or if they borrow TEE courses indiscriminately.

(8) A *modular* curriculum can be very useful in situations where flexibility is desired (the Honduras curriculum is of this type). It is made up of self-contained units (which could be a week or several months in length) which (perhaps with some exceptions) can be taken in any order. Students do them when they need them in their ministry. This gets away from the idea of storing up knowledge for years ahead when it might be needed, and aims at providing what is needed now. It will be much better remembered, and any gaps can be made up by a required number for graduation. If this appears too fragmented, it is always possible to add some basic survey courses so that the student has pegs on which to hang other facts. Or part of a year's work can be offered this way and part in a more traditional way. Modules can be self-instructional packages (with the teacher available to help). These could be used far more than they are in residence schools, as well as in TEE. Or they can be guided research courses. A suggested order can be given, with opportunity for individuals or groups (by their decision) to deviate from this as needed. The benefits—better motivation, much better transfer to life, and better retention.

(9) Another interesting approach is the *Spiral Curriculum*, valuable for content subjects where the development of concepts rather than mere memorization of facts is important. Certain fundamental principles are introduced and illustrated in a concrete fashion, and as the student progresses, he keeps returning to these p.144 same ideas, but with different illustrations and increasing complexity and theoretical components. The Science Research Associates Inc. have produced an elementary Social Science programme, for example, which follows this model and builds on carefully prepared fundamental ideas from a number of Social Sciences.

(10) A good curriculum takes into consideration not merely subjects, but *sequence and continuity*, with ample opportunity for review and review with increments. The designer considers both the natural sequence and logic of the subject-matter and the learning processes of the students, preferably using some researched findings rather than just hunches.

In the following article we will share samples of how a functional curriculum can be drawn up, and of how the fundamental ideas for a spiral curriculum might look.

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**Miss Harrison is the Secretary for Theological Education by Extension in the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship. p.145**



# Samples of Curriculum Design: I—A Functional Curriculum

by PATRICIA J. HARRISON

HERE WE will show our readers *a sample portion only* of this curriculum *in the making*. This is not the completed curriculum, but is intended to show one method of arriving at a genuinely functional curriculum. It is the *process* we are concerned with at this point, and it is not claimed that this is necessarily the ideal curriculum, though it looks like being a very practical one. The target population is urban lay leaders in Papua New Guinea.

The writers used the *Do* and *Know* model. (Some vary this with *Do*, *Be* and *Know*.) They first sat down and listed the main things urban lay leaders need to be able to *Do*. Then they listed what these leaders would need to *Know* in order to be able to *Do* these things. The *Do* list in a sense is a list of behavioural objectives, and the *Know* list shows cognitive steps involved in reaching those objectives. The correlation of the two lists quite precisely ensures that the lay leader's limited time is not frittered away with knowledge for its own sake. From the two lists, course areas and, later, specific courses can be drawn up. It is important that the churches and the prospective students have a part in contributing their insights to the *Do* and *Know* lists, and that some leeway be left for individual guided research, contract studies, etc., to meet needs as they arise. A good curriculum should have some 'open' areas like this, and should not be completely 'closed' or predetermined. There needs to be flexibility enough to respond to needs and to the promptings of the Spirit. Such 'open' spots can be within existing courses; they can also accommodate full courses designed to meet needs.

If the *Be* section ('What do we want the student to *Be*?') is omitted, this must be subsumed in the *Do* and *Know* lists as appropriate.

Here are a few sample sections from the curriculum-in-the-making: [p. 146](#)

## A. WHAT DO URBAN LAYMEN NEED TO BE ABLE TO *DO*?

### AREA 1: SPIRITUAL AND CHURCH LIFE

- \_\_\_ Use Bible, prayer, fellowship and service for spiritual food.
- \_\_\_ Witness to, and build up others in the Christian faith.
- \_\_\_ Demonstrate Christian character increasingly.
- \_\_\_ Discover and use gifts to develop the local congregation, and local and international outreach.

### AREA 2: FAMILY LIFE

- \_\_\_ Fulfil Christian duties and experience joy at each stage of psycho-sexual development.
- \_\_\_ Prepare for marriage with patience, purity and joy.
- \_\_\_ Act responsibly within the extended family.
- \_\_\_ Use the home for Christian outreach and hospitality.

### AREA 3: CULTURAL LIFE

- \_\_\_ Worship in a meaningful way with others.
- \_\_\_ Celebrate important personal, family and community events in a Christian and culturally significant manner.
- \_\_\_ Carefully think about enjoy traditional life.

- \_\_\_ Evaluate, respect and use traditional and other cultures on a Christian basis.

#### AREA 4: COMMUNITY LIFE

- \_\_\_ Be a good employer, employee, or job-seeker.
- \_\_\_ Make creative use of leisure time, and participate in sports, hobbies, etc.
- \_\_\_ Take responsible action to improve community life.
- \_\_\_ Develop both a local and an international perspective and concern.

N.B. These are general areas only, the counterpart of general objectives, and obviously must be developed in more detail lest they remain merely visionary. The same applies to the *Know* items below. p. 147

#### B. WHAT DO URBAN LAYMEN NEED TO *KNOW* IN ORDER TO DO THESE THINGS?

Each Area from the *Do* section is developed in the following *Know* section, and all items in the *Know* section relate definitely to items in the *Do* section.

We are not reprinting the whole *Know* section here; just to show the process, we reproduce one area only, and have picked for this purpose one of the areas which is generally not thought about as much as it should be in curriculum planning:

#### AREA 3: CULTURAL LIFE

The student will need to *Know*:

- \_\_\_ Scriptural principles for evaluating aspects of culture (this would include some theological as well as direct Biblical study).
- \_\_\_ How to evaluate and utilize cultural values and customs from a Christian perspective. This also involves:
  - \_\_\_ Knowing the *meaning* of customs connected with birth, initiation, marriage and death, etc.
  - \_\_\_ Anthropological insights.
  - \_\_\_ Seeing the variety in customs, but the common needs and aspirations involved.
  - \_\_\_ Differences between Animism and Christianity.
- \_\_\_ Understanding and accepting one's own culture within Christian guidelines, and respecting other cultures:
  - \_\_\_ Learning about various cultures, and sharing in several types of music, dress, food, drama, etc.
- \_\_\_ Use of local culture in making Christian faith relevant:
  - \_\_\_ Singing, musical forms, drama, story-telling, etc.
  - \_\_\_ Selection of topics and issues which need Christian influence.

#### C. SUMMARY OF COURSE AREAS

The final step, in this still preliminary phase, is to summarize the general *Areas of Study*—these are not yet specific courses. We find the following result. Notice that in each area of study elements of both *Knowing* and *Doing* are included. No section is wholly theoretical. p. 148

- |                                  |                       |     |                  |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|------------------|
| 1. KNOWING AND SHARING OUR FAITH | (Doctrine<br>1 course | and | Witness)         |
| 2. KNOWING AND OBEYING OUR LORD  | (Doctrine<br>1 course | and | personal ethics) |

3. KNOWING AND USING OUR BIBLE	(Biblical Studies; Conducting Bible Study Groups etc.) 2–3 courses
4. OUR PLACE IN THE CHURCH	(Ecclesiology and practical studies) 2 courses
5. OUR PLACE IN THE FAMILY	(Bible and practical studies) 2 courses
6. OUR PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY	(Bible principles; local culture; ethics; practical studies; theology of work, leisure and social involvement) 2 courses or more

TOTAL: 10–12 courses. p. 149

## Samples of Curriculum Design: II—A Spiral Curriculum

by PATRICIA J. HARRISON

THE PREVIOUS article also mentioned the Spiral Curriculum, by which the designers develop a series of very concise fundamental ideas of a discipline (or of several disciplines, in an integrated course). These six to 15 fundamental ideas represent, not minimal understandings of a subject, but those basic concepts which represent the total structure of thought in the area. The spiral approach is to return constantly to these same ideas, but each time in a more sophisticated manner, gradually developing understanding and illustrating the idea in greater depth and variety. The approach fits in well with material which has its own internal logic. We have suggested that a good curriculum does not include such knowledge for its own sake however, but because a basic task analysis (a *Do* list like that in Sample I above) shows the students' need for it. This then, is an approach to be used *after* the basic *Do* and *Know* lists have been done (or after application of some other functional approach).

### FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS OF SOCIOLOGY

The theoretical structure of sociology has been developed with Professor Robert Perrucci of Purdue University.

(1) Human societies exhibit patterned social behaviour that can be described and explained.

(2) Much of the human behaviour is guided by shared values that people voluntarily follow.

(3) Also, much human behaviour is guided by a set of norms and beliefs that people follow under the threat of punishment or promise of reward.

(4) One important part of the social system is organizations. People work together in organizations to achieve specific goals.

(5) Another important part of the social system is groups. People come together informally—some to strengthen their common values, some to strengthen their emotional identification. p. 150

(6) Organizations and groups have many positions that people fill. Positions are more formal in organizations than in groups.

(7) The unique way a person fills a position is his role. People play roles differently depending on other people's expectations and on their own attitudes, personalities, and life experiences.

(8) Another important part of the social system is social aggregates.

(9) Two types of force tend to shape organizations and social aggregates. Some forces lead to stability and regularity. Other forces lead to tension and strain.

(10) Values, norms, beliefs, organizations, groups, positions, roles and social aggregates influence human behaviour and the make-up of the social system resulting in support or modification.

From such a list of fundamental ideas, a course or curriculum is built up in orderly progression, but with a constant return to these basic concepts. p. 151

## The Obedience-Oriented Curriculum

*by* GEORGE PATTERSON

THE MANY unreached villages in northern Honduras compel church planting activity which normally lies outside the scope of a Bible School curriculum. But our extension Bible Institute, modified for in-service training among the poorly educated, proved to be an efficient tool for establishing new churches. We train some men as church planters, and they train the village men as lay pastors. Our regularly trained pastors shunned the backward villages. And if they did go, they produced little fruit. Nevertheless, the uneducated *campesinos* (peasant farmers) are a distinct people, whom Christ orders us to disciple. It was either disobey the Great Commission in this area or license these poorly educated *campesinos* to pastor their own people. We chose to obey. Some of our graduate pastors broke with us in reaction to this 'modernism'.

The obedience-orientation is not a method. It is an approach, a way of thinking and acting. It applies to the residential seminary, the extension institute, or the local church. If we start with absolute obedience to Christ and follow through without regard for the perpetuation of tradition, we arrive at the following requirement for theological education:

1. *Practical work must be done in a local church situation, in immediate obedience to Christ.*

Many institutions now require practical work to supplement the subjects taught. They reinforce doctrine and theory with field assignments. This requires more obedience, but

is still a doctrine-oriented course. Why not start with the practical work, then add the necessary doctrine to enable one to do it? The course is now activity-oriented, but not necessarily obedience-oriented. We define it further, to assure that the activities are done in obedience to Christ.

*2. All practical assignments are done in direct obedience to Christ, not in obedience to the professor.*

This usually solves any problem of lack of motivation. We must [p. 152](#) start, not with a 'Christian service assignment', but with the commands of Christ. We apply them to our own area and come up with a strategic plan. As we think of Christ's orders for us, the backbone of a new curriculum emerges. To obey him, our curriculum must fulfil definite objectives. Our general objective is to start new churches. Our immediate objective is to train Jim Brown to start a new church on Seventeenth Avenue. Our curriculum requires weekly, monthly or yearly objectives to be stated with names, places and activities. But we still have only an obedience-initiated curriculum. To be obedience-oriented we must move further.

*3. The teacher must communicate continually with the pastors in the field.*

What the student continues to study and do corresponds to the needs which arise in his field of responsibility. Essential elements of doctrine, Bible and history are introduced into the programme where they contribute best. The co-ordination requires communication. Church-planters on the growing fringe help to shape the immediate objectives of the curriculum. Experienced pastors who know what steps must be taken next, also guide those who train the workers. A professional educator designs the broad course of study and defines its unchangeable Biblical goals. But he maintains flexibility. He allows the continuous shaping of the course for each individual student according to the needs and progress of his congregation.

A completely autonomous seminary can hardly have an obedience-oriented curriculum. Ideally, each church would serve as a pastor training centre, in collaboration with a residential or extension seminary.

*4. The unchangeable Church doctrines must be taught along with their corresponding Christian duties.*

Truth does not change. But it was not meant to be partitioned into separate academic subjects. It was meant to be obeyed ([James 1:22](#)). We have not given theory and doctrine a lower place. On the contrary, with proper communication between pastor and teacher, we find where the doctrine fits into our work. Abstract theology, history and Bible content take on a surprising new importance. The student worker devours his studies with an eagerness seldom found in a traditional institution. [p. 153](#)

In order to teach doctrine and duty as one, we need a 'vertical' treatment of doctrine. We begin with God as the source of all truth and authority. His attributes find expression in the eternal decrees of God the Father. These decrees are wrought within creation by God the Son, whose work is applied to man by the Holy Spirit. Man responds in obedience. We start with God and end with man. The intermediate steps make up the content of a doctrinal study. A 'horizontal' approach to doctrine does not necessarily begin with God nor end with man's duty. Like scholasticism, it groups doctrinal truths in parallel or horizontal categories, comparing similar ideas. The Bible never systematizes doctrine in this talmudic manner.

Normally, the Honduras Extension Bible Institute does not enrol single young men. There is no rule against it. They simply do not adjust to this practical approach to doctrine. With some happy exceptions, most of them care only to study or teach theory; they lack



the maturity and respect of their community to do pastoral work and they often study primarily for material gain. They are instructed but one of the older extension students teaches them in a separate class.

*5. An obedience-oriented theology must recognize the spontaneous development of Christ's Church, under his sole command.*

Like all living things, a normal, healthy church must grow and multiply. That is her very nature. The obedience-oriented curriculum keeps in touch with the changing activities of a growing organism. The traditional curriculum leaves a man unprepared for participation in a widespread, spontaneous movement for Christ; his institutional mentality will hinder it. In Honduras we observed the two types of curriculum in a controlled 'laboratory' situation. Isolated from most outside influences, the villages churches were almost entirely dependent for their religious education upon the efforts of our mission. We could control the theological input. We observed churches whose only input came from each kind of curriculum; some churches received a combination of both educational influences. The obedience-oriented churches all grew, multiplied, maintained discipline and showed discernment in doctrine. The churches with the traditional, doctrinally-oriented education did not grow at all except through the efforts of outside agencies. Although they knew more Biblical content, they suffered from [p. 154](#) doctrinal error, lacked initiative, and caused problems continually. Churches influenced by both orientations did well when they gave priority to obedience. Otherwise, they did poorly.

For education to contribute to a spontaneous growth, the element of self-multiplication must be part of the curriculum. Every pastor simply trains a 'Timothy' with or without the help of a theological institution. This 'Timothy' in turn, quickly begins to train his own 'Timothy' ([II Timothy 2:2](#)). Every student becomes a student worker and a student teacher. By this process churches multiply rapidly, as does the number of Christian workers.

*6. Educational objectives must be realistic.*

We missionary educators are notoriously impractical dreamers. We confuse faith with wishful thinking. Objectives are not wishes, but plans. The obedience-oriented curriculum starts not with humanly inspired objectives, but with Christ's commands applied to the clear needs of a given field of responsibility. We will abandon educational projects which fall short, regardless of how much money and time has already been invested. We gear our courses to those who receive Christ and present themselves to the church for service. We put them to work immediately. Their educational experience must *follow* their church experience, and move along with it. It is a crime to commit an unproven man to several years of study for the pastorate when neither he nor the church knows if that is God's gift for him. The gift can be discerned only as one practises it in a local church situation. To assume that three years' study will automatically make a man a pastor denies the Biblical doctrine of gifts. Does the obedience-oriented curriculum confuse educational objectives with pastoral or evangelistic objectives? Yes—intentionally! They reinforce each other.

*7. The theological institution, residential or extension, formal or informal, must hold a regular 'practical work class'.*

The student must participate, from the beginning, in a class which deals with his practical work in some church. The teacher helps his students apply everything they learn; he supervises their Christian work. Continued study should depend on weekly fulfilment of this practical work. *Everything* taught should contribute to the student's successful weekly ministry. No professor can honestly say he teaches well unless his

students carry on a fruitful ministry. p. 155 The practical class does not train students for the future; it relates to a present pastoral experience.

This practical work class (which in TEE would correspond to the regular seminar) begins with detailed reports by each student on his field work. The class is limited to a maximum of five. The teacher gives each student special studies or counsel to meet the needs of his congregation. In a residential seminary these studies may be arranged with the professor of some related subject. The teacher files a list of these needs; they help in preparing textbooks and foreseeing problems.

In a residential school, each professor would ideally teach at least one practical work class, though only if they are experienced pastors. Only a few may therefore qualify and time may not allow so few to hold so many sessions. In this case students can form *teams*, each with a senior year captain. The professor teaches only these captains who then hold practical work classes for their own teams.

Some system is needed to verify each student's progress in practical activities. A checklist should depict each activity he must stage to raise up a church, edify the members, deal with problems and obey all that the New Testament requires of the Christian worker. This checklist resembles a history of a church as it grows from infancy to maturity. It mentions 'congregational' activities more than pastoral duties. When he begins his course the student worker, though not yet called 'pastor', begins to teach and lead a congregation, taking on more and more responsibility. Our primary aim is not to educate a man but to help a church grow.

The practical work class requires a Paul-Timothy relationship. The pastor teaches by his example; the student learns by imitation. The teacher in this relationship uses only methods the student can imitate; he uses only equipment available to his student. The teacher shares the responsibility for the effective, weekly ministry of his student. If his student fails, he fails. The proof of his effective teaching is the growth of the student's congregation, and this is the test of the student's success too, rather than the ability to pass an examination.

The Honduras Extension Bible Institute now offers *only* practical work classes. For each student there is a Register of Progress for his congregation. It lists 35 activities for which he must mobilize his congregation, and each requires several weekly studies. Each weekly study is a unit which, in one small booklet, combines theory p. 156 with a practical work assignment. These booklets are pocket-sized, for carrying and reading during the week. There are no long courses in Bible history, doctrine, etc. Each unit combines elements from these different areas. Some are strictly Bible studies; others combine elements of history, theology, Bible and homiletics all in one brief unit. These latter are usually the most effective.

#### 8. *Modifications in self-study materials are required.*

Regular textbooks were too ponderous for our *campesinos*. They will read no more than they can cover in an hour or two a week. Maximum condensation is called for. Normally, to cover all our objectives, we would need 1,000 such booklets! But we did not write one booklet to each objective. We laid our objectives on a two-axis graph with objectives on one axis and proposed texts on the other, after careful study to determine how to meet several objectives in one booklet.

Our booklets are dramatically written, and illustrated wherever possible. We vary the techniques, for example:

—Narrative—Comic-book format—Swift-moving programming.—Poetry and ballads—Other attention-holders, such as graphic outlines, diagrams, or provocative questions—anything to avoid the cold 1-2-3 logic of our university-trained teachers! The *campesino*

rarely thinks in the abstract. He reasons in terms of experience, people, animals and situations. We must *move* him.

In our textbooks, we use an uncomplicated style, without 'writing down'. We stick to a single theme, even though we may be meeting several objectives. And we make the material easy to apply.

Because of the modular format of these units, with each a self-contained entity, the order of their presentation can be varied according to the needs of the student and his congregation, even though there is a suggested order of progression. Real flexibility in the rate of progress is also possible.

Still other weekly study booklets treat definite congregational needs which may arise. An index entitled 'Needs and Remedies' accompanies the register of church progress. This index shows what special studies to give a student with a specific need. Over the years the same problems occur but not in the same order. A pattern, nevertheless, has emerged to enable us to foresee and deal with most of the problems of a new pastor. Dealing with needs as they arise guarantees maximum learning by the student, with a Biblical- p. 157 historical-doctrinal-pastoral treatment of the church's immediate needs.

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**Mr. Patterson is based in Honduras with the Conservative Baptist Mission.**

## Journal Survey

### **Themelios**

The last year's issues of this international journal, which is published three times a year jointly by the British Theological Students Fellowship and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, include the following topics:

*Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority*—James Packer

*Inerrancy and New Testament Exegesis*—R. T. France

*Preaching from the Patriarchs*—Robert P. Gordon The poor man's Gospel—Peter Davids

*\*The meaning of man in the debate between Christianity and Marxism*—Andrew Kirk

*Resurrection and immortality: eight theses*—Murray Harris

*Nairobi 1975: a crisis of faith for the WCC*—Bruce J. Nicholls

*Orthodoxy and heresy in earlier Christianity*—I. Howard Marshall

*Why were the Montanists condemned?*—David F. Wright

Subscription for 1 year (incl. postage): £1.20, US \$3.00 Sfr, 7.50, DM 7.00, f 9.00.

Orders for addresses in British Isles to: TSF, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP, U.K.

North American orders to: TSF, 233 Langdon, Madison, Wisconsin 53703, U.S.A.

Orders in Holland to: Administratie Themelios—Nederland, c/o Rijksweg 28, Baambrugge post Abcoude, Netherlands (postgiro transfer account 3230814).

All other orders to: Themelios, IFES, 10 College Road, Harrow, HA1 1BE, Middlesex, U.K.

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### **Theological Fraternity Bulletin**

Published by the Latin American Theological Fraternity each quarter. The 1976 issues featured:

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\* Reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

*The Kingdom of God and the Church*—C. Renè Padilla

*Beyond Capitalism and Marxism: Dialogue with a Dialogue*—Andrew Kirk

*The Subject of Abortion in Theological Perspective*—Dr. B.M. Couch

*Our Mission and Church Growth: Towards a Missiology of Masses and Minority Groups*—Orlando E. Costas

Subscription for 1 year: US\$ 5.00, £2.25.

Orders to: LATF, Casilla 25, Suc. 24, Buenos Aires, C.F., Argentina. [p. 159](#)

## Book Reviews

### BIBLICAL EXEGESIS IN THE APOSTOLIC PERIOD

BY RICHARD N. LONGENECKER

(Eerdmans, 1975. Pp. 246, \$ 4.95.)

Reviewed by ROBIN NIXON.

Reprinted from *Themelios* (September 1976) with permission.

PERHAPS the greatest challenge facing theology today is the hermeneutical one. In an ecumenical age, when everyone has to take notice of how other people do their theology, it becomes apparent that in many cases what divides us is the way in which we interpret and apply the teaching of the Bible both in the construction of systematic theology and in the approach to practical problems of ministry, worship and ethics. 'The Use of the Bible' has now become a paper for Anglican students in the General Ordination Examination. But behind this lies not simply the old 'principles of interpretation' (the grammatico-historical approach and all the rest), but also the new more sophisticated study of hermeneutics which has been developed in Germany and which people like Tony Thiselton are trying to introduce particularly to evangelical circles in this country. If the subject is so vital and affects us at so many levels, including of course our preaching, then any careful study of the approach to Scripture by the Biblical writers themselves must have an important part to play in the exercise. In the nature of the case such a study will normally be of the way in which the writers of the New Testament used the writings of the Old Testament. We are most grateful therefore to Professor Longenecker, who holds the chair of New Testament at Wycliffe College, Toronto, for providing us with an up-to-date and definitive survey written from the conservative point of view. It is a book which most theological students would be well advised to buy and it is to be hoped that there will soon be a British edition.

Dr. Longenecker begins by making the important point that [p. 160](#) 'historically, differences between Judaism and Christianity can in large measure be traced back to and understood in light of differing exegetical presuppositions and practices'. After noting that 'the evidence relating to first-century Jewish and Christian exegetical procedures is both voluminous and partial', he presses into his first chapter on 'Jewish Hermeneutics in the First Century'. The four main sources of information are the writings of the rabbis, the apocalyptists, and the sectaries of Qumran and Philo. From these he shows that Pharisaic scribes particularly developed midrashic exegesis, the Qumran covenanters *peshar* exegesis and Philo allegorical exegesis.

When dealing with the use of the Old Testament attributed to Jesus, Longenecker faces the problem of the septuagintal form in which some of the quotations are set. He suggests that this may be explained by postulating both a use of an early Greek compilation(s) of the sayings of Jesus by the evangelists and a degree of textual selection from among different versions by Jesus himself, who normally spoke in Aramaic but could also use Greek and Mishnaic Hebrew to some extent. The author thinks that 'we need not insist that he simply schooled his disciples in verbal retention and that they reproduced his interpretation as memorized "Holy Words" going no further'. Rather the analogy of Qumran helps us to see that the disciples were encouraged to continue their own study following the example of the incarnate Jesus and being guided by the Holy Spirit.

Next comes a chapter on early Christian preaching and the Old Testament. Dr. Longenecker follows the general line of C. H. Dodd in *According to the Scriptures* about the use of larger units of Old Testament material. He discovers as exegetical presuppositions the ideas of corporate solidarity, correspondences in history, eschatological fulfilment and messianic presence. He notes literalistic midrashic and *peshet* modes of interpretation. There then follow four chapters on the New Testament writings, section by section: Paul, the Evangelists, Hebrews and what he calls Jewish Christian tractates. In all these fields he shows himself well read and to have on the whole a sound judgement. Perhaps there are places where, had he been able to stay longer, he could have indicated more fully the way in which the context of the Old Testament passage shed a good deal more light on the way in which a particular quotation was used. p. 161

The concluding chapter is on the nature of New Testament exegesis. He sees this as essentially christocentric. 'The christocentric perspective of the earliest Christians not only caused them to take Jesus' employment of Scripture as normative and to look to him for guidance in their ongoing exegetical tasks, it also gave them a new understanding of the course of redemptive history and of their own place in it.' Longenecker sees, as well as a basic unity of approach, a certain diversity which was partly due to the personality of the writer and partly to the situation to which he was writing. Finally there comes the crunch question, 'Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?' I suggest that we must answer both 'No' and 'Yes'. Where that exegesis is based upon a revelatory stance, where it evidences itself to be merely cultural, or where it shows itself to be circumstantial or *ad hominem* in nature, 'No.' Where, however, it treats the Old Testament in more literal fashion, following the course of what we speak of today as historico-grammatical exegesis, 'Yes.' 'Our commitment as Christians is to the reproduction of the apostolic faith and doctrine, and not necessarily to the specific apostolic exegetical practices.' Whatever your answer to that may be, there are few books which could help you to understand the problem better.

## **VOICE OF THE CHURCH IN ASIA**

ed. BONG RIN RO.

Report of Proceedings, Asia Theological Association Consultation (Hong Kong, December 27, 1973-January 4, 1974). (Christian Communications, Ltd., Hong Kong. Pp. 168, \$4.00.)

Reviewed by RALPH R. COVELL.

Reprinted by permission from *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (October 1976) with permission.

ORGANIZED at the Asia South-Pacific Congress of Evangelism in Singapore in 1968, the Asia Theological Association (formerly known as TAP-Asia), has held three consultations. The last one brought 78 delegates from 15 Asian countries of widely diverse nationalities and cultures. Given these widespread differences, it is difficult for there to be one 'Asian voice'



and yet the theological thrust of these selected papers, if not every single emphasis, is remarkable for its unity. The consultation was held in three phases: the first dealing with the needs and problems of TEE in Asia, the second with theological education in general, and the third with the p. 162 question of salvation, particularly in the context of the ecumenical discussion of this subject.

The TEE reports reflect various concerns of the programmes that have developed in Asian countries: curriculum design, details of production of texts, the advisability of sharing materials across cultural boundaries, teaching methods, the use of cassette tapes, and the need for a co-ordination centre to share information, train teachers, write textbooks, and do research. All of the reports were written by missionaries—an urgent reminder that more efforts must be made to make TEE more church-oriented.

The issues discussed relating to evangelical theological education were of an extremely practical nature: integrating the 'mind, heart, and hand' in theological training, preparing men to plant churches, developing an Asian faculty, and creating a system for accreditation. Jonathan Chao's plea (p. 99) that the 'destruction of imported Western denominational boundaries is the first step toward establishing a truly Church-centred Asian theological education' deserves serious consideration.

The final series of papers reflects the fact that this consultation was held less than a year after the CWME's conference at Bangkok on 'Salvation Today'. Both theological and historical perspectives are used to consider this topic. Unfortunately, only one report reveals that this consultation was held in Asia. The viewpoints are evangelical and the discussions are thorough and competent, but the 'voice' is largely an echo of the Western perspective. The one exception, Saphir Athyal's article, 'Toward An Asian Christian Theology,' is a masterful and balanced interaction with the issue of contextualization in an Asian setting. Although he gives no blueprint for specific action, Athyal delineates the characteristics of an Asian Christian theology and shows its importance in the witness and mission of the Church and in its confessions of faith. He argues cogently for the need of the 'Church in Asia' to forsake the security and comfort of 'a foreign structure and a foreign theology' and trail-blaze in articulating the Christian faith in the 'influential thought concepts' of the area.

A concise and yet comprehensive 'Hong Kong Declaration' concludes this useful volume.

## **THE EVANGELICALS: WHAT THEY BELIEVE, WHO THEY ARE, WHERE THEY ARE CHANGING**

eds. DAVID F. WELLS AND JOHN D. WOODBRIDGE. P. 163  
(Abingdon Press, New York and Nashville, 1975. Pp. 304, \$8.95.)

Reviewed by BRUCE A. DEMAREST.

Reprinted from *Themelios* (Summer 1976) with permission.

In this volume Wells and Woodbridge, Church historians associated with Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, have undertaken to document the contemporary resurgence of evangelical Christianity in North America. In this collection of 13 essays, churchmen and scholars of evangelical and non-evangelical loyalties assess the remarkable phenomenon of the renaissance since World War II of Biblical faith in a secular, scientific culture.

By way of background it is shown that orthodox, evangelical conviction dominated American 19th century religion, believers applying their faith to social and political issues with considerable success. During roughly the first quarter of the 20th century, however,

orthodoxy became locked in an all-out struggle with theological scepticism introduced from Germany. With the settling of the dust after the Scopes Trial in 1925 and the capitulation of Princeton Seminary to liberalism soon thereafter, orthodox Christianity suffered a through-going and (what many observers regarded as) an irretrievable defeat. During the decades which followed, a large sector of orthodoxy, its confidence shaken and smarting from its wounds, turned in on itself and cultivated a narrow, defensive mentality characterized by vigorous polemic against intellectual pursuits and social activism. During this period of religious introspection the identification of the Gospel with the 'American way of life' gave birth to the phenomenon known as civil religion. Yet in spite of the near eclipse of Biblical faith the third quarter of the century from the 1940s has seen a marked reversal of fortunes in which a more enlightened, socially conscious evangelical movement has recaptured the initiative. At the local-church level as well as in seminaries, missions and para-church organizations the groundswell of evangelical conviction continues to mount, whereas liberalism is confronted with declining membership, revenue and effectiveness.

In the first section of the book, 'What Evangelicals Believe', John Gerstner of Pittsburg Theological Seminary defines the theological boundaries of American evangelicalism. The religious roots of evangelicalism can be traced through the European pietists back to the Reformers themselves. Whereas the New England p. 164 Calvinist Jonathan Edwards embodied the noblest ideals of the evangelical faith, the perfectionist Charles Finney a century later weakened the Reformation emphasis on salvation by grace through faith alone, thereby distorting the teaching of earliest evangelicals Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, etc. Thus for the Presbyterian Gerstner, authentic evangelicalism is synonymous with Calvinism. But it is doubtful whether one particular theological perspective can be regarded as the absolute norm of a broader movement whose devotees hold in common the profound experience of salvation in Christ. As Kenneth Kantzer argues in the following essay, the phenomenon of diversity within unity evident among the Reformers and cherished by contemporary conservative Christians represents the true hallmark of the movement. Although all evangelicals subscribe to the 'formal principle' of full Biblical authority and the 'material principle' of the saving Gospel of Christ, Kantzer demonstrates how evangelicals work out the details of their cherished fundamental commitments in various ways philosophically and apologetically. The student in search of an overview of systems of apologetics commonly employed by evangelicals will find Kantzer's article an asset. Paul Holmer, professor of theology at Yale, concludes the section with the observation that because of evangelical obsession with the pinpoint definition and rigorous systematization of religious concepts from an infallible source-book, truth becomes a 'pseudo-certainty' and the Christian faith is confined to a straitjacket. Evangelicals will find little commonality with Holmer's plea for quasi-mystical assent to the ideals of love, hope and charity.

In the second section, 'Who Evangelicals Are', black Christian leaders William Pannell and William Bentley trace the spiritual heritage and the present status of believers in the black community. Historically, black churches have been spared the trauma of schism along liberal-fundamentalist lines. Yet, on balance, orthodox evangelical belief probably constitutes the majority conviction within the black churches. One shadow across the American evangelical scene is that although black and white believers possess much in common doctrinally they serve their common God in separate ways. George Marsden, after a detailed survey of evangelicalism from 1970 to the present, detects the existence of a healthy shift from fundamentalism with its militant separatism, conspiratorial view of the world and antipathy towards theological scholarship to a Biblical evangelicalism with vision and commitment. p. 165 Social and intellectual isolationism is

largely, an issue of the past. Yet noting that all has not been lost, Marsden astutely observes, 'The isolation itself has had the effect of preserving the principle of Biblical authority that is a chief source of evangelical strength.'

Next, conservative sociologist David O. Moberg statistically documents the rising tide of evangelical fortune in North America, noting that 'it is conceivable that evangelicalism soon may become if it is not already the dominant religious orientation in Protestant America'. Yet Moberg rightly cautions that a concomitant of increased influence and power is increased responsibility: 'The greater the power and the longer it is held, the more difficult will it be for evangelicals to plead innocent for the collective sins of the nation, including those pertaining to the economic, political, educational, legal, health and communications systems.' If it is to discharge its stewardship with fidelity, American evangelicalism must authentically relate to society rather than retreat from it, and it must raise a prophetic voice upon society rather than seek the maintenance of the *status quo*. An essay by Martin Marty, professor of Church History at the divinity school of the University of Chicago, himself not a self-styled evangelical, is perhaps the most perceptive of the collection. In an attempt to identify evangelicals more precisely, Marty notes a paradox, namely, that at the doctrinal level evangelicals stand very close to fundamentalists—both movements insisting on the 'fundamentals' of the Christian faith: *i.e.*, Biblical inerrancy and the virgin birth, atonement, resurrection and miracle-working power of Christ. But in social responsibility, intellectual commitment, ethos and temperament evangelicals have more in common with liberals. From the perspective of a historian as well as an outsider, Marty concludes that contemporary American evangelicalism is the rightful heir of 19th century orthodoxy whereas fundamentalism constitutes the '“modernist” deviation'. Marty's problem, which we believe is amenable to cogent explanation, is that the instructed observer finds little justification why both fundamentalism and evangelicalism should be regarded as one expression of the Christian faith.

The third and final section discusses various aspects of evangelicalism in change, namely, the development of more responsible attitudes in the areas of social concern, political involvement and scientific achievement. One who naively assumes that North American evangelicals have never moved beyond the fringe of participation p. 166 in society might profit from Robert Lendar's instructive essay, 'The Resurgence of Evangelical Social Concern (1925–75)'.

*The Evangelicals* is a carefully prepared and well documented analysis of a significant resurgence in Biblical life and practice within the modern Church. With a following of some forty million believers, evangelicalism in America faces the acid test as to whether it is capable of effecting concrete changes in society following the Biblical pattern. The credibility of the movement stands or falls on this issue.

## **GOD, REVELATION AND AUTHORITY, VOLS. I AND II**

by DR. CARL F.H. HENRY.

(Word Books, Texas, 1976. Each volume \$12.95.)

Reprinted with permission of *Christianity Today* and Word Books.

CARL HENRY says, 'There is a crisis in modern theology ...', 'and at the critical centre of this crisis is the controversy over ... the nature of divine disclosure.'

*God, Revelation and Authority* is an extraordinary resource for all who share Dr. Henry's deep concern. It is a monumental work born of a warm love for God's truth. The first two volumes of this projected four-volume work are now available.

Volume I includes perceptive discussion on such topics as revelation and myth, the ways of knowing, and more than a score of other subjects. Volume II begins the most comprehensive indepth study of divine revelation ever made by any evangelical theologian.

In these two volumes, Dr. Henry discusses various philosophers—ancient, medieval, modern—and their ideas of how man receives his knowledge of God. Also contemporary treatments of history and tradition including famous theologians such as Gerhard von Rad, Paul Tillich, Moltmann, Pannenberg and others. In these volumes he has really grappled with the questions regarding revelation and history in evangelical perspective, focusing on the importance and limits of historical evidence and its bearing on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## **THEOLOGICAL PITFALLS IN AFRICA**

by BYANG H. KATO.

(Evangel Publishing House, Kisumu, Kenya, 1975. Pp. 200, \$ 3.50.)

Reviewed by JOHN F. ROBINSON. [p. 167](#)

Reprinted from *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (October 1976) with permission.

In this book an African evangelical theologian analyzes current trends in the religious thought of Africa today. Though published in Kenya and still difficult to obtain in North America, this book promises to benefit the church not only in Africa, but around the world.

The basic material in this work was originally presented as a doctoral thesis at Dallas Theological Seminary. However, the Nigerian author spent his early years in Africa and served until his death last year as the General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar, headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. Kato's concern focuses on the rising universalism that he sees surfacing on the continent. By universalism he means 'the belief that all men will be eventually saved whether they believe in Christ now or not' (p. 11).

Kato's purpose in writing is threefold. First, he wishes to warn Christians of the dangers of universalism, which are the 'theological pitfalls' the title refers to. He fears that those rightly trying to formulate an indigenous theology in Africa may betray Scriptural teaching in the process. Secondly, he wishes to stress that proclaiming the lostness of man and the uniqueness of Christ is not neocolonialism. Rather, it is saying what the Scriptures say. Finally, from an African perspective, he wants to begin meeting the need for literature exposing the evils of this universalism which permeates the works of most African theologians today.

Kato sees the battle raging over the so-called 'common ground' between Christianity and African traditional religions. He devotes three chapters to African traditional religions and discusses their relation to the 'Black Theology' of America and South Africa. 'African theology' is a newer concept which Kato calls 'the funeral march of Biblical Christianity and a heralding of syncretism and universalism' (p. 55).

In the central five chapters of his book, Kato offers a critique of the principal writings authored by two influential African theologians, John F. Mbiti of East Africa and E. Bolagi Edowu of West Africa. Besides exposing their universalistic tendencies, Kato discusses their approach to Biblical revelation. An attempt to evaluate the positive contributions of their theological viewpoints would make his analysis more balanced. [p. 168](#)

Kato concludes his book with three chapters on the ecumenical movement in Africa and a 10-point proposal for safeguarding Biblical Christianity in Africa. While his book is admittedly polemical in nature, Kato sounds his warnings from the vantage-point of high regard for the Bible. Many issues he treats are faced by the Church elsewhere around the

globe, and his book deserves a response from other evangelical theologians in the non-Western world. This book should be of special help to Christians working in an African context, seeking to analyze the variety of theologies confronting the Church there.

## **THE GREAT REVERSAL—EVANGELISM VERSUS SPECIAL CONCERN**

by DAVID O. MOBERG.

(Scripture Union, London, 1973. Pp. 194, £0.75.)

Reviewed By J. A. WALTER.

Condensed from *Themelios* (Autumn 1975) with permission.

THIS book examines our contemporary situation in which evangelicals tend to emphasize evangelism and to hold politically conservative views, while theological liberals tend to see salvation in the reconstruction of society, each camp hostilely viewing the other as unchristian. Moberg traces this polarization within Protestantism to the early decades of this century when there was a 'great reversal' in which evangelicals abandoned their long 19th century tradition of both evangelism and social concern, and focused on evangelism as the only way in which Christians should encounter the world.

Moberg is particularly constructive in that he faces up to the inherent conflicts between different sections of society such that any act of love toward one section is liable to have adverse effects on another. Taking up our cross daily, Moberg claims, involves going against our interests and taking a stand for the underprivileged. A possibly controversial concept he uses is that of social sin, our corporate responsibility for the complex social problems of industrial society.

My chief reservation is whether Moberg has himself resolved the dichotomy of evangelism versus social concern. He maintains that theologically there is not really a dichotomy, and that we should have not 'either/or' but 'both/and'. There should be a balance of the two. But if we should have a balance, how do we know when we have got it, and what is to prevent the scales being tipped out of balance again as 50 years ago? p. 169

Another way of resolving the dichotomy is to talk not in terms of 'both/and' but in terms of means and ends. This Moberg rightly criticizes, especially its use by those who see good works as 'bait' for evangelism, but he appears to lapse into this way of thinking himself, on, for example, p. 144 where he sees lifting a man out of poverty as a prerequisite for his being able to hear the Gospel, and on p. 147 where he says that evangelism is a prerequisite for reconstructing society.

A third way Moberg relates evangelism to social concern is to see the one as at the root of the Christian life and the other as the fruit. This seems a more hopeful and a more Biblical analogy as roots and fruits are integral parts of the same structure, and so the precariousness of models of 'balance' and 'means and ends' is transcended.

The book is well written and readable by the educated but nonacademic churchgoer, while at the same time it is well referenced and should not be dismissed by the academic.

## **WATERBUFFALO THEOLOGY**

by KOSUKE KOYAMA.

(Orbis Books, Mary Knoll, N.Y., 1974. Pp. 239, \$4.95.)

Reviewed by RALPH COVELL.

Reprinted from *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (January 1977) with permission.



'CONTEXTUALIZATION', a jaw-breaking word and concept, is broken down by Kosuke Koyama into a much simpler idea: concrete, down-to-earth preaching that speaks to farmers in Northern Thailand in the tangible realities of their lives of water buffaloes, sticky rice and cock-fighting. The author, formerly a Japanese missionary to Thailand who currently serves in Singapore as Dean of The South East Asia Graduate School of Theology, has presented us with a delightful volume of fresh, incisive insights into what he calls 'a particular orbit (Asia) theology'.

Originally published as separate essays over a period of 10 years, the material in this volume is organized into four sections. The first, entitled 'Interpretation of History' introduces the reader to nine geographic political entities in Southeast Asia, interpreting them both in terms of present need and in the perspective of 400 years of destructive and modernizing ('gun and ointment') contact with the Western world. [p. 170](#)

The final three sections ('Rooting the Gospel', 'Interpretation of the Thai Buddhist Life', and 'Interpretation of the Christian Life') are basically directed at one persistent theme: how can the Gospel accommodate itself prophetically (or prophetically accommodate itself) to specific contexts—political, social, religious and economic—of a Buddhist-oriented society?

Dr. Koyama develops several intriguing contrasts: (1) The 'Aristotelian pepper' of Europeanizing influence and the salt of Buddhist syncretism; (2) 'Neighbourology' in revealing God's love to peasants or religious triumphalism; (3) The Biblical linear view of history in a society where life is viewed in a circular fashion of cosmic regularity; (4) The 'wrath of God' operating in history to confront a culture of tranquility that is characterized by *apatheia*; (5) Relating to stereotypes (Buddhism) or to people (Buddhists); (6) A 'hot' God of involvement with people or the 'cool' *arahant* of pious detachment.

In the course of his presentation the author makes a strong plea for forsaking denominationalism (even as he recognizes the inevitability of denominations) and for a new generation of missionaries who live by 'crucified minds rather than by crusading spirits'.

This book with its vivid metaphors, fresh imagination and creative symbolism is a 'must' for anyone desiring to gain a glimpse into the Asian mind. Is it my American mind which desires a clearer distinction between natural theology and special revelation (seen particularly in his analysis of Kitamori's *Theology of the Pain of God*), or does the author overlook the Biblical data? Is this a product of his Asian mind, or of his ten years of American training? While intellectually stimulated by his penetrating observations, I question whether this is really 'water buffalo' theology. Its very sophistication seems more appropriate for the university classroom.

## **THE DELICATE CREATION—TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

by CHRISTOPHER DERRICK.

(Tom Stacey, 1972. Pp. 129, £1.95.)

Reviewed by R. J. BERRY.

Reprinted from *Christian Graduate* (September 1974) with permission.

THE theologian and the scientist agree that the cosmos makes sense; the old Gnostic and the modern existentialist agree that [p. 171](#) the cosmos does not make sense ... The prime concern (of an environmental theology) must be to re-connect the idea of God with the ideas of creation and immanence. While having no pantheistic tendency, without compromising God's transcendence and the immense ontological gulf between the

Creator and every creature, it will also—and more urgently—stress the other side of that ultimate dialectic, the creative and loving presence of God in all his works, all his possessions, and the consequent holiness of the phenomenal universe' (pp. 83, 94).

I shall long be grateful to Christopher Derrick for his book. He links modern attitudes to what one may call 'mainstream heresy', showing that the opposing ideas of technological supremacy (for example, Edmund Leach: 'Men have become like Gods, isn't it time that we understood our divinity? ... Why do so many of us talk as if the advancing sweep of technology were a natural catastrophe beyond all human control?') and primitive simplicity are both expressions of the same Gnostic heresy that Paul had to face in the early Church. Derrick illustrates this with a wealth of quotations from modern prophets: Teilhard, Koestler, Henry Miller. As he says, the current style of quasi-religious writing is packed with near-synonyms of part-translations of *gnosis*—'insight', 'awareness', 'meaning', 'experience'. He argues that both pessimistic and optimistic views of the world are based on a false premise—that the task of religion is either to help the spirit to rise above the world or to cope with an essentially evil situation. In other words, the world is essentially bad.

This Gnosticism rears its ugly head in all sorts of places. One manifestation is that sex is inherently evil; another is the modern habit of deifying Evolution to produce the idea that the universe 'just grewed', like Topsy. The environmental crisis can be seen in this perspective as the outcome of an inadequate understanding of God's world and his working in it. If our surroundings are merely an amorphous stage on which to work out our life, no wonder we have maltreated it with a clear conscience—or even with a pious belief of carrying out God's plans.

But the world is good—pronounced so by God himself in his account of the Creation, and taught so by Christ in several passages relating to stewardship. This demands from us a wholly positive response, which will be very different from any frenzied ecological 'involvement'. Derrick calls the particular version of Gnosticism [p. 172](#) he condemns 'Manichaeism'—a heresy that stemmed from the teaching of Mani in Persia in the 3rd century A.D. Augustine was influenced by it. The Greeks adopted Manichean as a synonym for dualism. It was a similar creed to that attributed (some think slanderously) to medieval Catharists and Albigensians, It has been described as 'a religious ideology which always tends to re-appear in Europe and the Mediterranean world in times of social and political crisis'. Derrick, well versed in Manichean writings, suggests that the heresy may be a subject of psychiatric as well as theological interest: 'In its most graphic form, mistrust is manifest in the paranoid vision of the world in which persons, places and things are all invested with a malevolent power. The paranoid is thus forced to develop rituals which ward off the danger of the world or to retreat from it altogether.'

This strikes two chords with me. First, the need for a view of the world as being designed and controlled by God, if I am going to be a fully integrated character. This gives a valid and causal basis of natural theology. And secondly, the paranoia produced by an apparently malevolent universe can be a starting-point for the Christian apologist. If anyone is doubtful how to proceed, go back to Paul's letters to the Colossians and Timothy.

Christopher Derrick is a Roman Catholic layman, educated by Benedictine monks. He brings ideas to his writing which are likely to be unknown to most of us. This is good, though we should not accept all he says. This book will be required reading for any of us who are concerned to develop an adequate theology of the environment—and that should mean all of us.

## **FAREWELL TO INNOCENCE: A SOCIAL-ETHICAL STUDY ON BLACK THEOLOGY AND BLACK POWER**

by ALLAN BOESAK.  
(Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1976. No price listed.)

Reviewed by JAMES LAGRAN.  
Condensed from *The Banner* (December 10, 1976) with permission.

ONE of the most important contributions of Alan Boesak's *Farewell to Innocence* is his convincing demonstration that you do not have to have black skin to appreciate and take instruction from Black Theology. This book is not an academic thesis that can be read with profit only by his fellow theologians, though it is a great contribution p. 173 to Reformed theology. He controls his source material so thoroughly that he is able to speak with his own voice both in sharp negative criticism (e.g. of Bultmann and Albert Cleage) and in creative affirmation (e.g. of Gutierrez and Ridderbos).

A number of specific socio-ethical issues that have been of special theological concern to the Reformed Church come to sharp focus in this study. Two examples are the relation between Church and State, and the conflict between Christian confession and allegiance to oath-bound societies.

The title of the book indicates the context in which the main thesis is developed. The Introduction informs us that the term 'innocence' refers to pseudo-innocence (p. 10). The central thesis of the book is that 'Black Theology is a theology of liberation' and that 'liberation ... is not only "part of" the Gospel or "consistent with" the Gospel, it is the content and framework of the Gospel of Jesus Christ' (p. 14). Here Dr. Boesak has shown that the Scriptures and Reformed theology demand such expression and judgement.

In short, this book is the best available introduction to the whole range of Black Theology, orthodox and heretical.

## **OPTIMAL RESPONDING: A PASTORAL DIALOGUE WITH TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS**

by FRIDE HEDMAN.

Abo, Finland. (Institutionen for Praktisk Teologi vid Abo Akademi, 1974. Pp. 128, \$4.80.)

Reviewed by A. V. CAMPBELL.  
Reprinted from *Scottish Journal of Theology* (Vol. 29, No. 5) with permission.

THE approach to psychotherapy known as 'Transactional Analysis' (or more commonly simply "TA") could be said to suffer from its own success. Two 'best sellers', *Games People Play* by Eric Berne and *I'm OK, You're OK* by T. A. Harris, have replaced the jargon of Freudianism with the jargon of 'Parent-Adult-Child'. Groups offering the TA solution have spread rapidly from the U.S.A. to Western Europe and many counsellors in both religious and secular settings have readily welcomed the new method because of its simplicity and adaptability.

Yet it will be unfortunate if TA is too easily dismissed as merely a new craze in popular psychology. Its analysis of interpersonal relationships offers insights which are missing from the recently p. 174 dominant psychoanalytic and personalist schools of psychotherapy. For this reason alone, Dr Hedman's monograph is to be welcomed. It offers us a brief and lucid guide to the inner complexities of the theory and exposes its basic assumptions about human relationships. Using the categories of 'essential' and 'existential' man, Hedman criticizes the ambiguity of the TA structural analysis of the personality. In particular he finds it inadequate in its treatment of guilt, ambivalent in its discussion of autonomy over against intimacy, and inconclusive in its definition of life goals.

Although the terminology of TA may seem strange to a theological readership, the general issues raised in Hedman's analysis are of prime importance both for the theology of pastoral care and for more general discussions of the doctrine of man. In a quite specific way, the themes of authority, rationality, love and responsibility are exposed to interdisciplinary critique. The main problem, however, is the appropriateness of the author's method. Certainly Hedman succeeds in meeting the TA theorists on their own ground, demonstrating by use of their own case studies the effectiveness and limitations of the approach. But the difficulties begin when he attempts a theological critique. How is this to be done without an oversimplification of both disciplines? And from *which* theological perspective is TA to be judged? Hedman adopts a recognizably Lutheran stance, with evidence of strong influence from Tillich, but he does not allow himself space to justify this choice.

Admittedly, methodological problems will always be encountered at the growing edge of theology. The great merit of this book is that it ventures into a contemporary field outside the safe territory of academic theology and initiates a dialogue about goals and presuppositions. One may confidently hope for a refining of method and an infusion of fresh ideas from Hedman's pioneering study.